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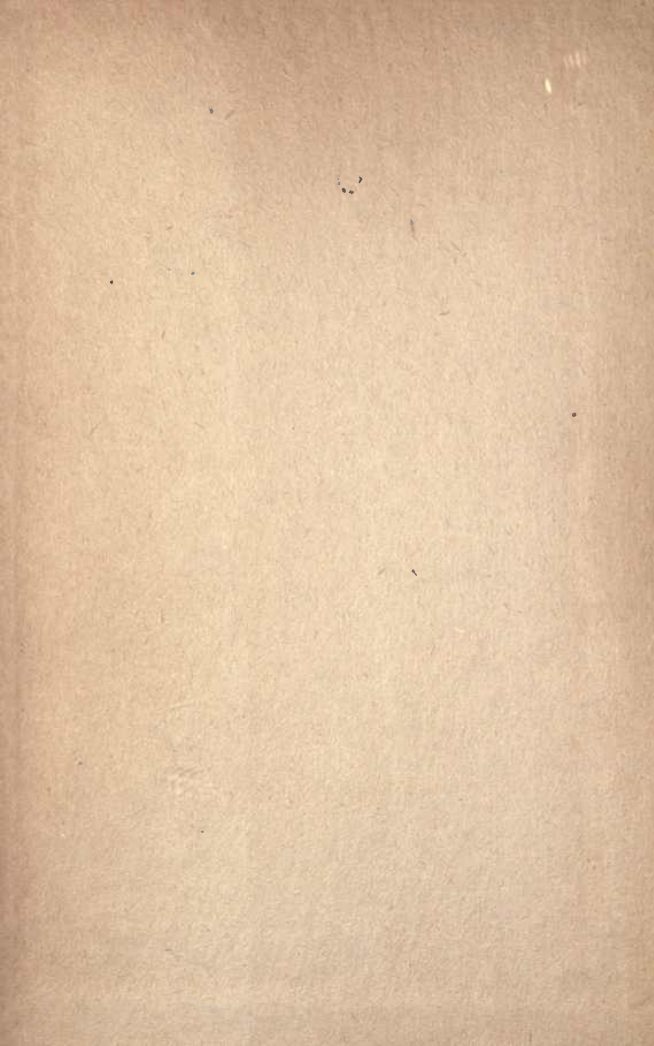


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*The
Leprechaun
of Killmeen*

*By
Seumas O'Kelly*

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Just an Irish remembrance
for dear Sonny -
from
Dorie.

Dublin - August 1922.

THE LEPRECHAUN OF KILLMEEN

BY SEUMAS O'KELLY

MARTIN LESTER, LTD.

44 DAWSON STREET :: DUBLIN

I. The Big Man of the Fairies.

UNTIL the day he left Killmeen, to "serve his time" in a big draper's shop in the town of Galway, Padraic MacDermott could never say for certain whether he was more exalted at getting the spare fork or the story out of oul' Tom Kelleher, the seanacaidhe, in the meadow, saving the hay. And I'll tell you how it all came about.

The summer was well on, and all the people of Killmeen were so anxious to have the hay saved that all the young gossuns were kept at home from school to give a hand at the tossing. So we all skipped and hopped down to the meadow in our bare feet, but the sorra fork was there to spare in the world but the one. We were all brought before Ned Darmody, the man that owned the meadow, in a body, and Ned, with the spare fork in his hand, surveyed us solemnly, to see who might be the fittest to handle it. He gave it, at last, to Padraic MacDermott, and Padraic, I needn't tell you, was the proud gossun. The rest of us had to go and gather bits of sticks and crooked branches from trees, and give a hand at the hay with them the best way we could; and against the evening was upon us, if we hadn't the hearty day's work behind us never mind it!

To be sure, Padraic MacDermott was the proud boy

with his fork going after the men every step of the meadow; but when the day's work was over, and the hay all in nice, tidy tramp cocks, he felt tired and worn enough, I'm telling you. But if he did itself, he was loth to refuse the other gossuns, when they up and asked him to go to oul' Tom Kelleher, and beg of him to tell a story. Oul' Tom Kelleher was sitting with his back up against one of the cocks, fiddling at a sugan with a long rib of hay between his teeth. When Padraic asked him if he'd tell them a story, oul' Tom looked hard at him for a good bit. It wasn't everyone Tom would give out a story to, but he liked to have little people about him. So when he said he'd try, Padraic felt that proud that he could jump a five foot bar gate. Little delay any of us made until we were settled around about Tom Kelleher in the meadow, as quiet as mice, to hear the story.

Oul' Tom Kelleher looked over the field, and the eyes of him rested on a fairy fort that you could see near the hedge, with its sides all covered with ferns, oul' ancient bushes growing in the middle of it, and a swamp around about it with a green growth upon it where even a frog would hardly venture if he was to get all the slugs in the world.

" 'Tisn't for me or for you," said Tom Kelleher, " to be puttin' the evil word on them that has the fort beyond, but if there is a man from here to Hong Kong and back that has cause to say the bad word of them, I'm that same man. And I'll tell ye how that is.

" 'Twas a fine summer evenin' I was comin' down along the road after a long walk in the heat of the day when I sat up on the ditch forninst the demesne wall down at the cross to ease me feet and take a pull of the pipe. The light of day was falling at the time, and I felt very drowsy

in meself. I was just beginning to nod when all of a sudden I saw a little oul' man peeping out from behind a laurel bush in the demesne, where the gap is in the wall. The little oul' man wasn't the height of me knee, and you never saw such a wizened oul' face as he had on him. He was peepin' at me just the same as if he was ready to make a bolt if I moved an inch; but I never stirred or let on to see a trace of him. Then, all of a sudden, I thought of who he was and the heart began to wallop the sides out of me. May the angels fly away with me if it wasn't the Leprechaun himself that was in it.

"Faith, I tell you what, I wasn't long dozing then! The crock of gold that I'd have if I could only once lay hands on him began to swim before me eyes, and, strange as it may seem, I thought I was standin' be the shore of Loughrea, and that crocks of gold were bobbin' up and down on the waves thick as you'd see the stars of silver dancin' on the water, and meself and I pullin' in the crocks as fast as every wash of the waves sent them clattering up on the rocks. Sure 'twas moidhered me head was entirely.

"But it cleared after a bit, an' I bethought to meself that the only chance I had of ever leaving a hand on the Leprechaun and makin' him land out his crock of gold was by pretending that 'twas asleep I was. You see, there's nothing so crafty as a Leprechaun, and the only chance you have with him is by being craftier again, and although it's meself that says it, Tom Kelleher wasn't behind the door when they were giving out the wits an' the craft. It's a good many cross-roads I passed in me day.

"So with that I began to snore out of me, at first easy, but after a while so as you'd hear me a quarter of a mile

down the road. And I put one of me hands, be the way of no harm, over me face, as if 'twas raving I was in me dreams, so as I could get a squint at the Leprechaun and what he was up to out through me fingers. For a good long bit he stayed peeping out from behind the laurel, with his wizened oul' face, and then he began to move out to the gap in the demesne wall, coming step be step as cautious as a cat over water. He stood on one of the stones of the wall for a good bit, looking up an' down the road, and it put the heart across in me when I thought some misfortunate wastrel or another might come trapesing down the road, frighten the jewel of a Leprechaun, and rob me of me fine crock of gold. 'Tis often a decent man lost his gold or his life be a misfortune of the like.

" Well, as luck would have it, the sorra soul was coming along the road, and all of a sudden the Leprechaun jumped down out of the stone, took one race across the road like a rabbit, climbed up on the ditch about five yards from where I was stretched, an' putting his wee arm about an oul' hawthorn bush, looked about him on every side to see was there any danger. Faith, when I saw the little legs working like lightning as the Leprechaun took across the road, I had as much as ever I could do to keep from giving a scorth of a laugh out of me. 'Twas only the thoughts of me crock of gold that made me keep it in. I kept up the snoring and the sleeping moryah, but I can tell you it was no joke to do that same. But, an' oul' dog for the hard road.

" After a list the Leprechaun began to come over to me on his tipsy-toes, and he ready to fly at the first stir. I could feel him comin' up along to me feet, but couldn't see him now. Then he moved up along until he come to me pockets, an' may I never taste another bite of the world's

bread if he didn't begin to feel every one of me pockets with the little hand of him. 'Well,' says I to meself, 'well,' says I, 'it's news to me that Leprechauns are daylight robbers, but sure,' says I, 'twas easily known,' says I, 'that it 'twasn't be honest means they come be the gold they have in their crocks. But,' says I to meself, 'but he's welcome to all the gold he'll get in Tom Kelleher's pockets,' says I. An' I had as much as I could do to keep in another scorth of a laugh at the notion of gold in my pockets.

"Well, he searched every one o' me pockets, an' I was tryin' to make up me mind whether I'd make a drive to grab him and demand me crock, but knowin' he was so swift I said I'd bide me time until I could get his back turned to me.

"Be degrees he came up around me head and down be me face, an' that I may be as dead as me aunt's husband if he didn't give me moustache a twirl of his hand passing down.

"'That's a fine whisker entirely Tom Kelleher has on him,' says he to himself. 'A couple of the hairs out of it would make mighty fine tackling,' says he, 'for me jaun-tin' car, that I yoke me squirrels an' me weasles to. They wouldn't be any the worse, though,' he says, runnin' his thin little fingers along one of the ribs, 'of a good washin' down in the stream of Killmeen, for this same dirty oul' Tom Kelleher,' he says, 'isn't be any manner o' means the cleanest no more than the decentest man in the parish, not to talk of his streel of a wife.'

"Well, as I say, I passed many a cross-roads in me day, but never was I so sore set before. I could stand anything about meself, but when he put disparagement on herself, that is one of the finest housekeepers, and the

tastiest woman that stands the country, I had every mind to jump up and squeeze the life out of the weeshy mala-facthur. But, no; I kept me temper, for I knew 'twas all the craft of the Leprechaun, because I couldn't see him without opening me eyes, and if I opened me eyes he'd see them, even in through me fingers, he was standing that close to me face. Before I'd have them half opened he'd be off the ditch in a leap and me only chance was to get his back turned.

"With that the Leprechaun walked down a bit saying to himself, 'He's a terrible baste entirely, the lazy slob of an ownshaugh, the good-for-nothin' Tom Kelleher. There isn't another man in Killmeen that wouldn't be ashamed of his life to be lying there asleep on the ditch this blessed and holy evening, and he snoring out of him as if he wanted to pull down the skies on the top of the people. Sure,' he says, says he, 'it must be dead drunk the oul' villain is.'

"Well, this to a man that kept his pledge honest for 25 year, come next Lady Day, was hard to bear, and I don't know to this hour how I ever put up with it.

"The Leprechaun then went to another pocket and searched it. 'The sorra ha'penny he has at all on him,' says he. 'I suppose his streel of a wife,' says he, 'couldn't be trusting him with it or else he drank it all, the murdering wastrel. Not,' says he, 'but that he ought to have enough of money on him. 'Tis well known,' says he, 'where the stockin' full of gold that the widow Brady had stolen from her went, and who robbed Kieran Connors coming home from the fair when he found the decent man the worse of a little drop. As the people says, Tom Kelleher,' he says, 'would steal the cross off an ass's back.'

"Well, when I thought of what herself would say an'

what herself would do if she heard the like of this of me I made one leap up and a drive at the Leprechaun.

“ ‘ Be this and be that,’ says I, with a holy roar, ‘ what a villainous liar the daylight robber of a Leprechaun is ! ’

“ The Leprechaun let one squeal out of him, and I fell off the ditch into the field, bringing him down with me. ’Twas the mercy of heaven he didn’t come under me or I’d have crushed him like a grain of corn on the grinding stone. I made a wild grab at him and caught him by the tail of his little green jacket as he was gathering himself together.

“ ‘ Take of me, Tom Kelleher,’ he says, struggling, and that I may never sin if he didn’t try to slip off the jacket, so as to leave it in me hands and escape. But I grabbed him by one of the arms, and it wasn’t no more than the thickness of a kippeen.

“ ‘ You’re not so smart as you think, me crafty Leprechaun,’ says I, ‘ and don’t forget it’s Tom Kelleher,’ says I, ‘ that you have to deal with—Tom Kelleher,’ says I, ‘ that has the best woman of a wife from here to Dublin town—Tom Kelleher,’ says I, ‘ that always kept himself fine and decent and respectable—Tom Kelleher,’ says I, ‘ that was never yet beholden for anyone to do his business for him—Tom Kelleher,’ says I, ‘ that has his pledge close on five-and-twenty good years—Tom Kelleher,’ says I, ‘ that never begged, borrd, or stole from man, woman, or child his life’s length,’ says I. ‘ And,’ says I, ‘ you’ll be just showing me where that crock of gold of mine is, an’ no more of your Andra Martins.’

“ The Leprechaun got fine and quiet then, and made no more attempt to get away. He just let a sigh out of him. ‘ Let out of me arm, Tom,’ he says. ‘ I’m caught now and the crock of gold is yours,’ he says. ‘ All you

need do,' says he, 'is to keep your eye on me until I show you where it's buried. It's surprising to me,' he says, 'that you don't know that much.'

"Well, I let out of him, but kept me two eyes on him, and he sat down on a stone. He examined his little jacket, and says, 'Musha, Tom,' says he, 'you nearly tore the coat off me. And what harm, but it took a thousand of the best ants in the parish,' he says, 'six months to spin and weave that same coat, and two thousand more of them to pick the wool for it off the lambs an' dye it green with the herbs. The trimming,' says he, 'is of the best of flaggers and they frilled.' His little breeches were made out of white ceannabhain, plucked below in the bog and spun be the ants. He said the Bean Sidhe washed and beetled them for him once a week below in the stream, and they were certainly fine and white. His boots were made by the Clurichaun from bull-rushes, laced with fairy-flax, and his cap was a dried mushroom, covered with the copper-coloured leaves of a beech tree, that the Pooka made him a present of last Samhain Night. But 'twas the little old wizened face of him with all the wrinkles on it, that was the wonder of the world to see. He put one leg over his knee as he sat on the stone and that was the comical cut he made of it. He was the dhrollest sight you ever saw.

"But I wanted me crock of gold an' all the time I was thinking of all I'd do with it. I'd have the finest place in Killmeen and make a queen of herself—what she was well fit for.

" 'Hurry on,' says I, 'and show me where me crock of gold is.'

" 'Oh,' says the Leprechaun, 'you needn't fret about your gold. If you were as sure of getting heaven, you'd

be all right. But be easy for a bit. Sure, I'm so dying for a talk and a smoke, Tom. It's forty years since I was caught before, and the man that caught me then didn't grudge me a bit of t'baccy.'

"Well, I couldn't do less than hand him a bit of t'baccy that was ground up nice and fine. He put his hand in his breeches pocket and took out the half of a nutshell, stuck a bit of kippeen in a little hole that was in it, filled in the t'baccy, struck a match and pulled away as happy as you please.

" 'Musha, Tom,' says he, 'this is the grand smoke entirely. If you hadn't a pull out of your pipe for forty years, 'tis you that'd relish it, I go bail.'

" 'Meaning no insult,' says I, 'you must be very old.'

" 'I am, Tom,' says he. 'I'm as old as the hills of Connemara.' And he pulled away at his pipe, looking down very thoughtful-like all the time. I kept my eyes well on him, for you couldn't be up to the craft of the like of him.

" 'When all is said and done,' says he, all of a sudden, without looking up, 'she was a mane oul' rip.'

" 'Who was?' says I.

" 'Herself,' says he.

" 'Oh,' says I, 'I didn't know there was a Mrs. Leprechaun. Long life to her,' says I.

" 'No,' says he, 'there was no Mrs. Leprechaun, only there very nearly was. That's how the whole row rose,' says he.

" 'Musha, do you tell me so?' says I.

" 'I do, in throth,' says he.

" 'Glory be to God' says I.

" 'Herself,' says he, taking another pull, 'was the

Queen of the Fairies. A fine woman, no doubt, Tom, but a bit ould and stale. But her daughter, the Princess, was a fine young woman, and no mistake. She wasn't more than a couple of thousand year in them days, and she looking as sweet and as fresh as the daisy that puts its head up over the green sod in the spring.'

" 'The craythur,' says I.

" 'The Leprechaun shook his head sadly, and blew a pull of the pipe out of his mouth. 'Me heart,' says he, 'was broke after her.'

" 'God help us !' says I.

" 'Tom Kelleher !' says he, jumpin' up an' stickin' out his bit of a chest, 'I'd have it be known to you,' he says, 'that I was the Fear Mor (Big Man) of the Fairies !'

" 'Thunder and turf, you were,' says I.

" 'I was,' says he. 'Finn Mac Cumhail,' says he, 'couldn't hold a candle to me. An', says he, 'I sought the hand of the daughter o' the Queen an' there was a great gradh on her for me. But the oul' strap of a mother wouldn't hear tell of it. Instead, what does she do,' says he, 'but banish me from being the Fear Mor of Tir na nOg to be a Leprechaun on the world. She did it with a wave of her wand, the mane oul' streel.'

" 'Meelia murdher,' says I.

" 'An', says he, 'she put a curse upon me an' I goin'. The curse was that I should go around takin' all the goold I could get an' putin' it into crocks, an' when I had crocks o' goold hid away that'd be as high as Croagh Patrick, when they'd be dug up that I'd get back to Tir na nOge an' be the Fear Mor o' the Fairies again.'

" 'Croagh Patrick is a nice little bit of hill,' says I.

" ' 'Tis,' says he ; and to make it worse, the oul' strap sent me into the hardest country in the world to get goold

from the people in. But', says he, 'if any man laid a hand on me an' then kep' his eye on me I'd have to give him out the last crock o' goold I buried.'

" 'The jewel of a Queen,' says I, keepin' me eyes on the Leprechaun.

" 'But,' says he, 'if I could get away from him or get his eye off me I need give him no crock, an'. the Fairies would bury a hundred crocks for me,' he says.

" 'The sorra hundred crocks I'll be the manes of givin' ye,' says I.

" 'An', says he, givn' another sigh out of him, 'the poor little child of a Princess is waitin' for me to come back to wed her.'

" 'The tinder chicken of the world,' says I.

" 'Ochone!' says he.

" 'Mo bhron!' says I.

" 'The last crock I buried,' says he, is——'

" 'Where?' says I.

" 'Come on and I'll show you,' says he, 'you heartless oul' varmint.' An' with that he knocked out the ashes out of his nut-shell on the heel of his bullrush shoe, pressed down the t'baccy with his fingers, and put it in his pocket an' stood up.

" 'Hurry on,' says I.

" 'You haven't far to go,' says he.

" 'So best,' says I.

" 'An' may it melt with you,' says he, 'an' your seven generations after you.'

" 'A fine thing to have to melt it is,' says I; 'hurry on, me Fear Mor of the Fairies.'

" 'Keep your eye on me,' says he.

" 'I wouldn't look at you if it was to save me life,' says I, an' I glued my eyes on him.

"He walked down the fields an' I after him, an' to see him steppin' out with the little legs of him an' you'd never do a day's good. An' all the time I was plannin' in me head what I'd buy an' what I'd get when I had me lashin's of goold. I'd show Killmeen what it never saw before.

"Well, where did he bring me but right into the meada here, where the aftergrass was growin'. He headed along up the meada, an' as we came along I heard a footstep behind us. I was dyin' to know who was in it, but couldn't look back.

" 'Hould on,' says I, 'there's someone behind us an' he'll see us,' says I.

" 'What harm,' says he.

" ' 'Tis,' says I, 'for you'll have to give him another crock o' goold if he nabs you.'

" 'A crock here or there,' says he, 'when you come to think of the size o' Croagh Patrick, won't make much odds.'

" 'But,' says I, ' 'tis many a long day you'll be collectin' the fillin' of a crock in Killmeen.'

" 'I'm a long liver,' says he.

" 'An' the poor Princess,' says I, 'she'll be wasted entirely waitin' for you.'

" 'She's only a child,' says he, 'an' we'll give her time to grow.'

" 'The footsteps were comin' nearer to us all the time, an' I was cursin' whoever was in it.

" 'Can't you wait a minute,' says I, 'an' he'll pass?'

" 'You're in a hurry, you said,' says he.

" 'I'm not, now,' says I.

" 'But I am,' says he. 'It's Martin Moran,' says he, 'that's in it.'

" 'Well, when I heard that I nearly dropped. Martin

Moran an' me weren't the best of friends, an' it was givin' up to him that a maner or more graspin' or a hungrier hound didn't stand in the country. I'd as soon meet the devil as Martin Moran, an' I havin' the Leprechaun.

" 'I'll have to be houldin' you be mane force,' says I, 'if you don't stand for a bit.'

" 'Musha,' says he, steppin' out, an' his legs seemed to be gettin' longer an' longer every inch of the way, 'is it begrudgin' one of the neighbours a crock of goold ye are? An' you are the dacent, sober man, Tom Kelleher,' he says, 'that never did a wrong turn!'

"I made a dive at the Leprechaun an' he took to the Galtees like a hare an' I after him.

" 'Oh, meelia murdher! it's a Leprechaun,' says the voice of Martin Moran, an' with that he took after the Leprechaun, too. I could hear him, an' partly see him as he took along the meada, but I made sure to keep me eyes on the Leprechaun.

" 'He's my Leprechaun, Martin Moran,' I called out, 'an' you have no business to be after him.' I felt ragin' mad with the hungry hound.

" 'He's belongin' to whoever catches him,' Moran shouted back. The Leprechaun used to look back over his shoulder an' he runnin', an' I knew be the way he was manoeuvrin' that he wanted to get Martin Moran between mesel' an' the line of sight so that the spell would be broken. There's no batin' the craft of a Leprechaun, an' there he was, turnin' an' twistin' for all the world like a hare an' we turnin' him here an' there like a pair of hounds over the meada. The aftergrass was thick an' high an' I knew that be all the turnin' an' twistin' that the Leprechaun thought I'd trip an' fall, an' then, of coorse, I'd have to take me eyes off him.

"I never thought that an' oul' man could run the way Martin Moran ran that evenin' after the Leprechaun in the meada.

" 'Cocks o' goold! Cocks o' goold!' Martin roared out of him, an' he made a spurt the same as if he had a pair of wings. He got into the Leprechaun in a couple of bounds, an' the next I saw was the two of them rollin' over in the grass.

" 'Cocks o' goold, yer sow! ' cried Martin.

" 'He's mine, I tell ye,' I roared, an' fell in a heap down on the two of them. Martin had the Leprechaun by one of the legs an' I grabbed a hould of the other one.

" 'I had him first,' Martin cried, gettin' up on his knees, holdin' his leg. 'Not be any manner o' manes, Martin,' says I. 'I had him above on the ditch, an' we were only comin' down for the cock when you happened to come across us. Let go o' me Leprechaun.'

" 'Misfortune to Killmeen, anyhow,' says the Leprechaun, 'an' the first day I ever put a foot in it. It's murdered I'll be entirely with them.'

" 'Don't be killin' the craythur,' says I.

" 'It's yoursel' that's on for killin' him,' says Martin.

" 'Ye're both killin' me dead,' says the Leprechaun. 'It'll be another case o' killin' the goose with the golden eggs.'

" 'Faith, an' it won't,' says Martin, 'if Tom Kelleher has some soort of rayson in him.'

" 'All right, let go of your leg, an' I'll let go of mine, an' we'll lave it to the Leprechaun,' says I. 'After all, 'tis him that has the goold,' says I. 'An' let him say who's entitled to it.'

" 'Keep ye're eyes on me,' says the Leprechaun, 'but let go of me legs.'

“ We let go his legs, an’ kep’ our eyes on him. The Leprechaun sat up, an’ pulled a rib of the aftergrass, wipin’ his face with it. He sighed a great, long sigh. ‘ I won’t be the betther o’ this,’ he says, ‘ for the next fifty year.’

“ ‘ Give out the crock you were bringin’ me for,’ says I, ‘ an’ no more of your antics.’

“ ‘ But you’ll be plased to hand me over mine first, as I caught you first,’ says Martin Moran.

“ The Leprechaun sighed again. ‘ Killmeen will be the fine rich place shortly’ says he.

“ ‘ There’ll be them that’ll be well off in it, anyhow,’ says Martin Moran, an’ I knew the hungry eyes were blazin’ with greed in his head.

“ ‘ They’ll be rowlin’ in riches in Killmeen,’ says the Leprechaun, settlin’ the mushroom of a hat on him.

“ ‘ Martin Moran,’ says I, starin’ at the Leprechaun, ‘ this carractan of a Leprechaun is only killin’ time to make up in his crafty oul’ head how he’ll get away from us. If he gives both of us the slip, he’ll have two hundred crocks of goold buried for him be the fairies.’

“ ‘ He’ll never lave me sight,’ says Martin Moran, ‘ so long as there’s an eye in me head.’

“ ‘ One poor little Leprechaun agin two big men from the parish o’ Killmeen!’ says the Leprechaun, with another sigh. ‘ It’s the world that’s badly matched anyhow.’

“ ‘ An’, Martin Moran,’ says I, ‘ if you have any dacency or spirit in ye, ye won’t be goin’ between me an’ me crock, that I earned honest above the ditch, before ever you dremt there was a Leprechaun in the parish.’

“ ‘ We’ll hear about that some other time,’ says Martin. ‘ Why didn’t you hould him when you had him, if what

you say is thrue, which I don't feel inclined to b'lieve.'

"That Martin Moran is a terrible hound, an' no mistake. I was mad enough to take him be the throttle, only I knew if I did I'd lose me crock.

" 'The neighbours,' says the Leprechaun, fixing one of his bullrush shoes, that got loose from the struggle, 'will be wondherin' where all the grandher an' all the riches an' all the high notions came from. They won't hear much about the Fear Mor of the Fairies, I go bail,' he says, lookin' up at me with a sharp oul' eye, an' the head of him cocked to one side. " 'Will they, Tom, a leanbh?' he says.

" 'Give out the crock o' gold,' says I, ragin', 'that you were bringin' me for, if you're an honest Leprechaun.'

" 'I'm all that,' says he.

" 'But you'll be landin' out mine first,' says Martin Moran.

" 'Bedad, anyhow,' says the Leprechaun, 'it's Killmeen that's goin' to flourish.'

"I jumped up, keepin' me eyes on him. Martin Moran jumped up, too. I walked over an' took the Leprechaun be the arm an' shook him. 'Me crock of gold, quick,' says I.

"Martin Moran shook the other arm. 'After me,' says he.

"The Leprechaun looked up at us with his oul' face. 'Kilmeen,' says he, 'will be rotten with money, an' we'll be givin' big fortunes to all the daughters.'

"I shook him again an' Martin shook his side.

" 'We'll have sprees an' parties an' ructions of all kinds,' says the Leprechaun. 'Them that hadn't a dacent wheelbarrow,' he says, 'will be goin' in for a carriage an' pair.'

" I gave him a bettther shake, an' Martin did the same.

" ' Me crock,' says I.

" ' Me crock,' says Martin.

" ' An ' some of us, maybe, will be goin' in for a foot-man,' says the Leprechaun. ' We'll be knockin' th' owl house with the rain down,' says he, ' an' buildin' palaces. An' we'll have the quality drivin' up to us.'

" ' That'll do, now,' says I.

" ' The crock, like a dacent man,' says Martin.

" ' The wonders of the world,' says he, ' will be comin' over Killmeen. The stream will be runnin' red with wine.'

" ' Faith we both began shakin' him like the dickens, an' he got up on his legs an' began to struggle with us. ' Is it murdher ye're on for ? ' he says, shouldherin' here an' there.

" ' Not at all ', says I. ' It's only that crock of gold of mine you were brining me for we want.'

" ' Just my crock,' says Martin, ' and then yourself and Tom Kelleher can talk it out about the other one,' he says ' the grabber.'

" ' Take o' me,' says the Leprechaun, ' or the sorra crock ye'll ever see. Keep ye're hungry owl eyes on me, but don't be tearin' the clothes off me back. Misfortune to Killmeen, anyhow.'

" We let out of him then and keep our eyes on him instead. He stood out from us, put his two thumbs in the armpits of his waistcoat, struck his two legs well apart, and putting the head of him to one side, looked up at us with his owl face. ' To business, gentlemen,' says he, like any lawyer in a coorthouse, ' to business. This is how the land lies, my good friends. We want two crocks of gold. Very well. One crock there lies buried under the owl bush in——'

“ ‘Where?’ we both cried, holding our breath, as the Leprechaun paused.

“ ‘The Leprechaun put his head over to the other side and grinned up at us. ‘In the neighbourhood,’ he says, with a sweep of his wee hand that took in nine parishes. ‘That’s the last one I buried. The one I buried before that is above in——’

“ ‘Again the Leprechaun paused, an’ we both asked, ‘Where?’ with our hearts in our mouths waitin’ the wink of the word.

“ ‘In Donegal,’ says the Leprechaun.

“ ‘You can be goin’ away up to Donegal with the Leprechaun, Tom,’ says Martin Moran to me.

“ ‘Thank you, Martin,’ says I, ‘but ’twould be well worth your own while to be thinkin’ o’ makin’ the journey yoursel’. ’Tisn’t everyone that gets a crock o’ goold for goin’ to Donegal, an’ mesel’ an’ the Leprechaun were comin’ for the one under the oul’ bush when we come across you.’

“ ‘It seems, gintlemen,’ says the Leprechaun, ‘that we can’t agree an’ the night is comin’ on. I’ll tell you what we’ll do. We’ll have a short race for it. I’ll go first, ten yards ahead of ye. Keep ye’re eyes on me. I can’t run so fast as I’d get out o’ ye’re sight. But whichever one of ye gets to the fort above first will get the first crock. The other one will get the one above in Donegal. Done!’ he says.

“ ‘Neither mysel’ or Martin Moran relished this, an’ we begin to object, but the Leprechaun moved back a couple of steps while we were arguin’. We’d have struck each other only that we knew if we did we’d lose the goold. I was foammin’ an’ Martin Moran was tearin’. All of a

sudden, the Leprechaun shouts, 'One, two, three, an' away!' an' off with him towards the fort.

"It was a good way up. Martin an' meself kep' up to each other an' our eyes on the Leprechaun. He went only middlin' fast, an' we kep' fairly well on to him. Be rason of havin to keep our eyes on him we stumbled an' staggered a great dale. Martin Moran began to work his arms an' his elbows to keep me back, an' I did the same to him. We were for all the world like a pair of madmen tearin' up the meada, an' as we came nearer the fort we were shovin' an' jostlin' each other an' shoutin', an' tellin' each other what we thought about each other's seven generations. 'Twas a wondher of the world we didn't bring all in the parish down about us. A couple of times when Martin staggered I was dead sure he was done for, but he'd lie into me in a minute again, an' he shoutin' 'I've me eye on him.' An' I was nearly gone a couple of other times, but I kep' me eye on the Leprechaun, an' mighty hard I found it to get into Martin again. How an oul' man like him ran that mortal day bate out every-thing else. Glory be to God! but 'twas wondherful.

"As we came up to the fort the oul' Leprechaun gained on us, an' the legs of him seemed to be len'thenin' out. He looked back at us. 'Keep ye're eyes on me whatever ye do,' he'd call back. 'Keep them on me! Goold in crocks yer sowl!'

"Well, I think the eyes were burstin' out of our heads, as we went flyin', an' stumblin', and shovin', an' pushin', an' shouldherin' along. As we came up to the fort, both the one an' the other of us was blowin' like whales, an' we made one desperate, gaspin' spurt. 'Death or glory,' says the Leprechaun, an' we threw out our arms before us. We were goin' neck an' neck. 'Goold in crocks!'

shouted the Leprechaun. 'Tom Kelleher for ever!' he yelled. 'Martin Moran, me life on ye!'

"Martin put one of his arms all of a sudden around me neck. He was gettin' wake; an' thought I'd go from him, but sure, what with the runnin' an' the excitement, I was as wake as a cat mesel', so I put my arm around Martin's neck. We staggered on this way, one not able to let the other go. The Leprechaun was now goin' like a rabbit on its track into a burra. 'Death or glory!' he shouted. I made one last dyin' plunge, for I thought Martin was bate up. Martin made another dyin' plunge. We weren't a hen's race from the fort. We had had our eyes as fast on the Leprechaun as a setter on a grouse in the heather, an' the two of us, gaspin' for life, staggerin', tremblin' all over an' I thought I could see oceans of gold before me. As we had our eyes on the Leprechaun we couldn't rightly see what was before us. The Leprechaun made a spring up on the fort, an' began to dance for joy on one leg, and then on the other, an' takin' off his mushroom cap, began to wave it at us. 'Me sowl for ever,' he cried, 'Glory!' Sorra such a race was ever seen in nineteen baronies. Tom, ye jewel, your last gasp! Martin, me son, a dyin' skip! Now for it. Take the pool, me hearties!'

"Well, we never thought of the pool. We gave a soort of a stagger for it, then the legs went clane 'an dacent from under us an' with one splash we went into the stagnant water at the fort. We went into our wathery grave together, an' as we went down, an' knew all was up, an' that each of us had done the other out of our gold for ever, we locked in each other's arms. I think Martin Moran made an offer to kiss me, an' as well as I remember, I gave him a last, lovin' hug to me scalded heart.

“ The last thing I heard was a laugh up in the fort.
‘ Two hundred crocks ! ’ I heard the Leprechaun shoutin’.
‘ Croagh Patrick is comin’ down ! ’

“ Then I felt smotherin’ an’ gurglin’ an’ suffocatin’, an’
struggled out of Martin’s lovin’ embrace. I made one
leap in the water—an’ found meself sittin’ up, shiverin’
with the cold, on the ditch over the demesne wall.

“ There wasn’t a sound in the place only the shakin’
of the leaves of the laurel tree near the gap.”

II. Herself and the Leprechaun.

WHEN the ice was broken in the meadow the first evening by Tom Kelleher telling his story, somehow or another we got into the habit of gatherin' around a haycock to hear another one when the work of the day was over. And I think Tom used to like the way the small gossuns and cail-ins used to huddle in near him, with the eyes of them lookin' over the country with the wonder of the world in them, while he gave the story out of him. You could see well be them that they all expected to come across a Leprechaun in no time, up in an ould' ditch or the like, an' that they were makin' up their minds how they'd handle him when they'd nail him. The very second evenin' we were all there Tom began with the Leprechaun again.

“ ‘ As I was just sayin’,’ says Tom, the same as if he had never stopped since the evenin’ before— ‘ As I was just sayin’ I got mesel’ sittin’ up on the ould’ ditch forninst the demesne wall, an’ I felt very quare in mesel’ entirely as I went up the boreen home. I couldn’t make up in me mind at all whether ’twas a drame I had or not. An’ in the mornin’ I was up at cock-crow, an’ I on me way down to the fort above. ‘ Sure,’ says I to mesel’, ‘ maybe it wasn’t a drame I had at all, an’ God between us and all harm, but maybe ould Martin Moran is stretched for himself below in the swamp, an’ I lyin’ in me feather bed the

len'th of a night. If', says I, 'he was the manes of goin' between me an' me crock o' goold itsel', I'm not that haythen that I'd lave him alone there in destruction at the bottom of the swamp.'

"So I wouldn't be aisy in me mind until down to the meada I took, an' it was that early that the first of the larks was only beginnin' to shake the dew from his wing as he went up singin' at the dawn. When I come to the swamp at the fort, there I saw the green scum over every inch of it, an' then I knew that a water-hen didn't paddle across it let alone two big men fall in their wakeness into the middle of it.

"I was just turnin' away with an aiser mind when a bit of somethin' white lyin' among the ferns caught me eye, an' I went over. I thought the sight would lave me eyes when I looked among them same ferns above on the fort. For, as sure as ye tossed the hay to-day, what did I see lyin' in it but the Leprechaun.

"There he was an' he lyin' on the broad of his back, with his two little arms stretched out on each side an' the short bits of legs half-gathered up under him. He had the very same face, an' the very same dhress, as the Leprechaun I caught in me drame. The mushroom hat, with the copper-coloured leaves, was a bit away from him, as if it had fallen off, an' the wisp o' grey hair of the head was all straggly-lookin'. At first I thought 'twas dead entirely the crathur was, but with that I heard him mutterin' like in his drames. He moved one of his arms an' turned over on his side, an', be the same token, as he did I could just hear him sayin', 'Take care o' me, 'Tom Kelleher.'

"When I heard that says I to meself, says I, 'Well,' I says, 'for a sure thing, me drame is out.' I hadn't the heart in me at all to make a grab or anything of the kind at

the Leprechaun, for 'twas a pity to see the craythureen sleepin' out in the ferns like that. An' I never heard tell no more than that, of anyone comin' across a Leprechaun so handy, an' ketchin' him without any bother or contrivance whatsoever. Of coorse ye'll understand, at the same time, that I thought of me crock, an' I said to mesel' that if any man was deservin' of it after what I went through in me drames, an' after being as good as drowneded with Martin Moran in the hole, that I was that same man; An' I thought of herself, an' what I'd be able to make of her, after all. To be sure, I told her of me drame, an' it made the heart in her long for the crock o' goold I missed, an' wouldn't mesel' be the proud man when I'd make it all come to pass !

"An' with that I thought o' Martin Moran, an' how he went between me an' me riches, an' it put the heart across in me. He was a man to be out early, that same Martin, an' wouldn't it be the misfortune of the world if he come again between me an' me Leprechaun. So I got such a turn at the notion of the like happenin' that I just gave the Leprechaun a little bit of a shake.

" 'Wake up, my friend,' says I to him, nice an' neighbourly. He opened his eyes, an' instead of they being as bright as the eyes of a weasel they were heavy an' drowsy in the small head of him. He blinked, an' blinked, an' yawned, an' then sat up. Then the eyes brightened a bit, an' he stared up at meself. I couldn't help but laughin' at how soft he was caught, for once in his life.

" 'Tom Kelleher,' says he, wonderin' ; 'is it you that's in it ?'

" 'Every inch,' says I. 'An' I'm glad to meet ye. The top of the mornin' to ye.'

" 'Musha, Tom, a vic o, says he, lookin' hard at me,

'you were never half so glad to see me as I'm to see you. The Lord be thanked,' says he, 'that 'tish't at the bottom of the swamp yer body is lyin' an' the soul of ye below in hell's fire roastin' like a Christmas turkey cock in an oven.'

" 'Amen, then,' says I, lost to understand what the Leprechaun was up to. He didn't look a bit crafty an' desateful as he was in me drame. He put out one of his hands an' settled his hat on him. Then he rubbed his eyes and began to shiver. 'This was the damp place to be sleepin' an' the dew fallin',' says he, yawnin'.

" ' 'Twas all that,' says I.

" 'An', Tom, I'd sooner see yourself than all the men in the world before me an' I'll tell you why.'

" 'Maybe,' says I, keepin' me eyes on him, 'that 'twould be as well for us to go for that crock first, an' then we can have a talk about things,' says I, beginnin' to suspect he might be up to his antics after all.

" He seemed insulted-like at this, but did it as well as he could. 'If you think, Tom,' he says, 'that I begrudge you yer crock ye never made a bigger deception to yourself in all yer born days. An' as yer in such a dirty hurry with it,' says he, 'we might as well get it an' part, though I'd like to tell ye me feelin's, an' what I went through on the head of you.'

" 'You can be tellin' me all about it when we dig the crock,' says I.

" I couldn't help pityin' him at the same time. He looked very white an' sick in the face an' famished with the cold. He was shiverin' in every inch of him. But I was dyin' to make sure of me crock.

" 'Come on, Tom Kelleher, for yer goold,' he says, standin' up. 'I was glad to see you be rayson of the quare drame I had an' thinkin' 'twas a dacent kind of man

ye were, I was goin' to turn round an' ask ye to give me a cup o' tay an' a hate of the fire in yer house above; but sure the world is a hard place for the poor Leprechaun. No one cares what kind o' misfortune comes to him so long as he lands out the goold it took him years to gather. It's the bitter day, anyway, I laid me eyes on the hard world. Come on for yer goold, Tom Kelleher. There's no dacent man in the country since the oul' stock went.'

"Well, I felt a lump comin' up in me throat as he spoke them same words so sorraful like, but then I bethought that 'twas maybe only more of his craft, so I stepped out without a word after him.

An' as he went along, he says to me, 'It's more than a mile or two of a road from here to the oul' bush where the crock is, an' if we come across them on the way that'll likely enough want a say in the goold, don't ye be blamin' the Leprechaun,' he says. 'Tis often,' he says, steppin' out quicker, 'that I see oul' Martin Moran in the fields in the mornin'.'

"Well, the fright of the drame was on me, so I says, 'If we see Martin Moran, we'll be thinkin' of waitin' for a bit.'

" 'Oh,' says the Leprechaun, 'you're not goin' to have everything yer own way like that. Them that refuse,' he says, 'people for a drink of tay in their house, refuses,' he says, 'them that's goin' to give them more goold than there's in the rest o' the barony, can't be expectin' to be much obliged. If it makes no difference to ye, Tom Kelleher, we'll just be steppin' out a bit. Yer in a dirty hurry with yer goold, an' I'm in a hurry to part yer company. 'Tisn't good for dacent people to be longer on the road with mane people than they can be helpin'. Mane-ness,' he says, 'is contagious, an' I don't want to be havin'

me charachter tarred. Step out now with ye, Tom Kelleher.'

"Be this time we were goin' down along the hedge at a smart walk. An' the Leprechaun didn't lave a word in me, an' I did feel mane, an' maneness wasn't ever in the Kelleher breed. But I had me crock to think of, an' swallowed that lump like that rose in me throtle. Then the dhread o' Martin Moran an' the drame come on me as we heard someone comin' walkin' up the other side of the hedge. The Leprechaun cocked his head when he heard it an' coughed.

" 'The devil choke ye, an' yer coughin', ye imp o' damnation,' says I to him in me anger, when I knew he was on for the destruction of me.

"At me words the Leprechaun turned round on his heel an' his two weeshy fists closed.

" 'Is it fight yer on for, Kelleher,' says he, beginnin' to roll up the sleeves of his green jacket.

" 'Will ye whisht?' says I to him, ragin', as the step came up along the hedge.

" 'No,' says he, puttin' up the guards an' makin' a side step an' a leap back like a champion boxer. 'No,' says he, 'I'll not whisht. Don't think yer goin' for to bully me, Kelleher. I can stand yer maneness, but when it comes to yer cursin' an' blastin' an' swearin' an' maledictions I'm goin' for to have a row. Come on, now, if yer fit, an' Martin Moran'll see fair play between you an' me this blessed an' holy mornin'. Come on, Kelleher, if yer a man at all.' And he cut another caper about me. The step was comin' nearer, an' already I thought I saw the hungry eyes of Martin Moran looking out at us through the bushes. I was in a proper hold.

" 'Musha,' says I, low an' sootherin' to him, 'musha,

don't be so unraysonable now. Come on an' we'll have that nice cup of warm tay that hersel' has above in the house. Yer cold after the night, now.'

" 'Ho!' says he, glarin' up at me. 'Ho,' he says, 'that's it, is it? Ye mane oul' tinker, what's yer cup of tay to me? Isn't it fight I want, an' me blood boilin' this mortal minute for a dacent wallop at yer blasphemous gob? Come on, now, an' we'll have it out. Ayther you or me, Kelleher, will be scattered an' bate, an' here's Martin Moran to bury whoever is to be dead. I'm on for a fight, so I am.'

" 'The footstep was comin' nearer, an' he was bringin' destruction entirely on me. To see him with the fists up an' he caperin' about you'd have to give the last laugh in the world.

" 'But me crock I was thinkin' of all the time. So I says, 'All right,' I says, 'if yer on for yer caperin' I'll just give you one crack that'll send you back to where ye come from, an',' says I, 'yer days of deludherment'll be ended for ye.' An' with that I put up the guards be the way. The Leprechaun steadied himself on his feet to meet me, an' I own he had the pluck of a bred game-cock. But I just made one bound at him, caught him body an' sleeves in me arms an' ran with him as fast as you'd see the race-horses runnin' to the winnin' post at Knockbarron Races.

" 'I never cried crack until I got into me own house an' closed out the door. Herself was walkin' across the kitchen floor with a mug in her hand, an' when I leaped in with the Leprechaun in me arms she let one scream out of her and the mug fell and was broken in bits.

" 'God an' the angels be about us! but what's that ye have with ye, at all, Tom?' says she.

“ ‘ It’s the Leprechaun,’ says I, ‘ that wanted to see you an’ dhrink a cup of tay with us.’

“ I left him down on the floor, an’ when he got on his feet he just let a sigh out of him, pulled down the little jacket that was crumpled on him, an’ settled the mushroom hat on his head.

“ ‘ God bless the work, Mrs. Kelleher, ma’am,’ says he. Hersel’ was starin’ in the wonderment of the world at the sight of him. But when he spoke up she come to.

“ ‘ You, too, sir,’ says she, ‘ an’ yer heartily welcome.’

“ ‘ I know that, ma’am,’ says he, ‘ for you wouldn’t be Tom Kelleher’s woman if ye hadn’t a big, warm heart within in you.’

“ ‘ Don’t mention it, sir,’ says hersel’, droppin’ him a purty bow.

“ ‘ I met Tom above at the fort,’ says he, ‘ an’ although he wanted me right or wrong to come up an’ have a cup of tay I wanted him to come down for a crock o’ goold first an’ foremost. An’ would you believe me, Mrs. Kelleher, as we went down along the hedge talkin’ an’ laughin’, who comes up the other side of it for himsel’ but a boy of the Moran’s below. Goin’ to the well with the can he was, an’ his eyes of him that full of the sleep that he wouldn’t see a hole through a laddher, let alone a Leprechaun like mesel’, ma’am. But nothin’ ’d do the man of yours but that we’d come up for a cup of tay an’ he thought ’twas Martin Moran himsel’ that was in it. Thank ye, ma’am,’ he says, sittin’ down on the stool hersel’ put before him.

“ When he gave this out of him I felt all the blood in me body goin’ up to me head with madness over how I de-caved mesel’, but I couldn’t but hould me tongue before hersel’.

“ ‘ Aye,’ says I, ‘ so we were.’

“ ‘Wethen, I’ll have the tay for ye in one minute,’ says hersel’, goin’ over to the dresser, an’ gettin’ the things ready. I could see be the way the hands of her were rattlin’ an’ shakin’ the cups that ’twas crocks a goold she thought every one of them was. The Leprechaun took out his nut an’ his kippeen, the same for the world as he had in me drame, an’ when I gave him a bit of t’baccy he smoked away as continted for himsel’ as a King in the hate of the fire. An’ he drank a fine big cupful of strong tay out o’ a saucer.

“ ‘Prosperity on yer hand, woman of the house,’ says he to hersel’ in Irish, with as fine a blas on the tongue as you could wish to hear.

“ ‘Not at all, me dacent man,’ says hersel’. ‘ ’Tis a thousand welcomes you are to it.’

“ ‘ ’Tis out of china an’ goold yersel’ an’ yer man ’ll be drinkin’ yer tay one of these days,’ says he, wipin’ his mouth.

“ ‘Yer goin’ to give me man a crock?’ says the wife.

“ ‘Aye, the crock below near the oul’ bush,’ he says.

“ ‘The oul’ bush where?’ says hersel’?

“ ‘About a few miles or so from here only,’ says he. ‘We’ll be goin’ for it as soon as ever yer man wants.’

“ ‘Don’t hurry yersel’ at all,’ says I.

“ He lit the pipe an’ looked into the fire. The eyes of hersel’ were shinin’ in her head as bright as any of the blazin’ sods.

“ ‘Tom,’ says the Leprechaun, all of a sudden. ‘Below in the fort where we met I was goin’ for to tell ye somethin’ that was on me mind. Well,’ says he, ‘here ’tis for ye. I fell asleep from the hate yesterday under an oul’ laurel bush below in the demesne, an’ if I didn’t think ye caught me on the ditch. An’ havin’ no way out of ye I led ye into

Martin Moran in the meada, knowin' 'twas aisier to get out of two min than one. An' I made a race for ye up to the pond, an', sure enough, as I thought, the pair of ye fell into the swamp that ye forgot all about. An' whin I wakened up I thought of the two hundred crocks the fairies had to bury for me. But,' he says, puttin' a coal in the nut of a pipe, 'when I thought of the way I drowned two men for a bit of goold I got a turn agin' mesel', an' up with me to the fort, an' to kill me grief, I dug out a bottle I buried there with a drop of poteen in it that I took a couple of months ago from Corny Donovan's still in the mountain, an' I took more than was good for me, like many another. I slept there all night, where I fell in the ferns, an' the cold an' the dew were on me when I wakened up. An' that's why,' he says, 'I was so glad to see yersel', an' I thinkin' 'twas in yer death ye were in the swamp. 'Tisn't everyone that'd care about what they'd do for two hundred crocks of goold, though, but I'm not one of thim soort.'

"Well, I didn't know what to say at all to this. I was beginnin' to think that the world was goin' upside down with me.

" 'Come,' says he, standin' up, 'we'll be goin' for the crock; an' it's glad I am yer the live man to carry it away with ye.'

" 'Sit down now for a bit; sure yer not half rested at all,' says hersel', jumpin' up too. The Leprechaun looked at her, an' if he did 'twas pale his oul' face got. He was thinkin' to himsel' that 'twasn't so aisy to put the blarney on hersel'.

" 'The sooner,' says he, 'the crock is dug up, the aisier Tom an' me 'll be in our minds, Mrs. Kelleher, ma'am.'

" 'No hurry at all is there on ye,' says hersel'. 'Sure,'

she says, 'ye must be tired an' sick lyin' there abroad all night in the ferns, an' the best thing for ye to do is to lie in the bed within for a sleep an' a rest.'

" 'Musha,' says the Leprechaun, ' 'tis the fine, decent cut of a woman ye are, long life to ye. But I'm sorry to be sayin' that 'tis off with mesel' I must be goin'.'

" With that we heard someone comin' up to the gate outside. Hersel' got all of a flurry, an' she just caught the Leprechaun be one of the arms, an' although he thought to hould back, she half dragged him into the room. I heard her closin' an' boltin' the winda, an' then she came out an' closed the door, sayin', 'Go on now, like a good man an' be restin' yersel' there on the bed. Sure yer not yersel' yet be rayson o' the little drop ye took for yersel' last night.' An' at the same time she shoved me into the room, too, with the Leprechaun, sayin', 'Keep yer eyes on him, Tom.' In another minute I heard someone comin' into the kitchen outside, an' Mrs. Darmody's voice sayin' she came up for the loan of a lossit to make a cake, an' hersel' gave it to her an' welcome. But she never bobbed 'yes,' 'aye,' or 'no,' about the Leprechaun. The sorra the such a wife a man ever got as I got in hersel'.

" When Mrs. Darmody went she came in again. The Leprechaun had climbed up on the bed an' curled himsel' up on the pillow, an' was going fast asleep. The poor craythur was worn out, after his hardships of the night. Hersel' fixed her eye on him an' kep' it on him until he was fast asleep. Then she turns to me. 'Hethen, Tom Kelleher,' says she, 'what in the world do you mane be comin' runnin' into me at cock-shout of the mornin' with a Leprechaun in yer arms, an' like as if all the divils of hell were on yer heels an' givin' me that fright that I brakes

me fine mug with the blue rims upon it? What for do ye do the likes, 'Tom Kelleher?' she says.

" 'Musha, whist, now,' says I, 'won't we be able to have goold mugs in no time with the Leprechaun in the house? Where's the rayson in ye now at all?' I says.

" 'Rayson, is it?' says she. 'The sorra great rayson in makin' people brake their mugs of a Monday mornin' an' bringin' bad luck on the house. Them that brakes or spends on Monday mornin' 'll be brakin' an' spendin' all the week, an' its you that ought for to be knowin' it. An' what harm,' says she, 'but me fine mug with the blue rims that I got such a bargain in the shop because there was a little crack on the bottom of it. 'Be mindin' that mug,' she says, ' 'twould last the len'th of me life, an' there 'tis now,' she says, 'an' it in smithereens on me floor with ye.'

" 'I must be feedin' the calves,' says I.

" 'An', says she, 'maybe 'twas off you'd be goin' with the Leprechaun, like a fool, an' meetin' half the parish, an' ye warned in yer drame agin Martin Moran. A nice man ye are for to be ketchin' a Leprechaun indeed! 'That Leprechaun,' she says, pointin' at the bed, 'is goin' for to stay in me house until all in the parish are in their beds, an' then,' says she, 'when we have the moon I'll be takin' me spade an' goin' with him to the oul' bush for the crock, an' it's into the bank in the town every ha'penny o' it'll be goin'. An', she says, 'to think of me fine mug with the blue rims to be broke with ye.'

" I went off then an' fed me calves an' did me work around the place. An' hersel' never left the house that day, an' I couldn't help but thinkin' 'twas a quare oul' Leprechaun that'd be gettin' the upper hand of her.

" When I went into me dinner, hersel' was puttin' the

spuds steamin' out on the table, an' every one of them burstin' their sides laughin'.

" ' Make no delay, now, Tom,' she says, ' for I've me churnin' to do yet.'

" ' The Leprechaun was sittin' smokin' be the fire, an' I saw that no matter what hersel' had to do about the house she always had her eye on him. I kep' me eyes on him, too, from the minute I went in.

" ' Won't ye be havin' something to ate now, sir? ' she says.

" After a bit the Leprechaun answers back : ' If it be plazin' to ye, Mrs. Kelleher, I'll try a small taste o' something.' So he walked to the table an' sat on a chair, an' ate a fine spud or two, hot, with salt on it, an' drank a mug of milk.

" ' God send you'll never know want or shortness in yer house, good woman,' he says, when the dinner was over.

" ' God send,' says hersel'.

" ' An' now, I've me churnin' to do,' she says, an' got to work at it.

" I sat at the fire for a bit with the Leprechaun, an' we smoked like a pair of good neighbours. ' God bless the work,' says I, when herself started off with the dash in the churn.

" ' Someone,' says she, ' would want to be blessin' it for it's mortal little we got out of it the last two churnin's, whatever is wrong with that brindle cow lately.'

" ' True enough,' says I. ' Maybe,' says the Leprechaun, ' that it isn't the fault o' the baste at all. There's them in the parish,' he says, ' as might be interferin' with it.'

" ' There's no one in the parish o' Killmeen,' says hersel', ' bad enough to take the butter out of the milk.'

"The Leprechaun shook his oul' head, lookin' into the fire. 'I saw more of the world than you did, Mrs. Kelleher,' he says, 'and I know what people with evil eyes can be doin'. You're too soft altogether, me good woman, for some of them that's goin'.'

" 'Maybe, I am,' says hersel', workin' away at the dash.

" ' 'Tis little ye know,' says he, 'of what some people do be conthrivin' agin their neighbours. They'd take the milk out of yer tay, not be talkin' of the butter out of the milk.'

" 'Well,' says hersel', changing her hand on the dash, an' givin' it one of the round sweeps she couldn't be bate at. 'Well,' she says, 'if there is, the sign of the Cross between them an' this churnin'.'

"I got up then, an' took me turn at the dash.

" 'If I was you, Mrs. Kelleher,' says the Leprechaun, 'I'd be findin' out whether 'twas one of the neighbours or not.'

" 'An' how'd I be findin' out now, me man?' says hersel', liftin' the lid to see how the milk was getherin'.

"The Leprechaun looked up in wondher at her.

" 'Is the cat in the house?' says he.

" 'She's lyin' there on the winda,' says hersel'.

" 'Put her outside the house,' says the Leprechaun. 'Put her out the back door, an' her tail goin' first.'

"Hersel' did as she was told.

" 'Walk round the churn three times, now, with an empty vessel in yer hand. When you do that pull a hair out of yer head over yer left ear, an' put the tongs to red-den in the fire. When that's done you'll be takin' three spoons of the milk out of the churn, put them into the empty vessel an' fill it up with water taken from a runnin'

stream. Walk round the churn, then, three times agin, beginnin' the opposite side to the first round, pull a hair from over yer right side, take out the tongs from the fire, point it north, south, aist, and west, let the cat in the front door, an' then stick the tongs in the vessel with the three drops of milk and the water taken from a runnin' stream. If there's them in the parish interferin' with the butter they'll feel a pain that'll soon make them come runnin' to ye, an' when they lay a hand on the dash the butter'll come back.'

" ' Well,' says hersel', the sorra much signs o' it getherin' anyhow, an' in the name of God I'll do as you say.'

" She went through it all, then, an' the Leprechaun directin' it. Faith, when she opened the front door in walked the cat with her tail up, an' she looking at the Leprechaun.

" ' 'Tisn't yer grandmother, Mrs. Kelleher,' says the Leprechaun, ' I'd want to be tellin' what to do, for she'd know hersel'. A fine, lanky woman, God rest her soul ! '

" ' Amen,' says hersel'an' mesel'.

" ' Then says hersel', all of a sudden, ' if I was you, me good man, I'd have another sleep in the room within.'

" ' I slept enough all the mornin', thankin' ye all the same, ' a bhen a tighe,' says the Leprechaun.

" Hersel' went out to the door, an' I knew be her that she was watchin' to see was there any one comin'. Soon she comes runnin' in an' takes the Leprechaun be the arm an' lands him into the room. ' A sleep,' says she, ' is the finest thing in the world after males.'

" I stepped into the room after the Leprechaun without takin' an eye off him. Hersel' had hardly the room door closed outside when someone come runnin' into the

kitchen. I took the Leprechaun in me arms an' went over to the room door, put an eye to a crack that was in it, an' watched out. Who did I see runnin' into the kitchen but Maura Lally from the Cross. That I may never see the Day of Judgment alive if she hadn't the two hands up to her head, an' she cryin', and the face of her as red as a turkey-cock.'

" 'God save ye, Maura,' says hersel', never lettin' on nothin'.

" 'Ora, God save ye kindly, Mrs. Kelleher,' says Maura, an' the tears in her face, 'an' God bless the work. But I come runnin' up to know if you'd be givin' me a little drop of the stuff ye have in the bottle ye got in the doctor's for the neuralgia. I'm goin' out of me mind with the pain of it for a while back.'

" 'Musha,' says hersel', 'why wouldn't I be givin' it to ye, Maura, a stoir, an' welcome. 'Tis mesel' knows what it is to be havin' the neuralgia, an' the saints be takin' it from ye, soon an' sudden, ye poor crathur.'

" Hersel' put some of the doctor's stuff on a bit of wool and stuck it into Maura's teeth an' after a bit she got relase. Then she took a hand at the dash for a bit, an' went off with hersel', sayin' she hadn't left one in the house after her.

" When she went out hersel' took up the lid of the churn, an', sure enough there were the curds thick an' plenty floatin' beautiful around the yalla milk. I walked out with the Leprechaun an' saw them.

" 'Well,' says hersel', 'who'd ever drame o' Maura doin' the like on us or her havin' an evil turn? May God forgive her this day, but she's the whipster of the world to be goin' between neighbours an' their butter. 'Twas a quare neuralgia she had entirely, an' that every

tooth in her head may feel like a red tongs in her mouth when she does the like again, the desavin' galavanter. 'Twas true for the Leprechaun that 'tis too soft I am entirely for the like of her. I won't be without lavin' the track of me tongue on Maura Lally when I meet her again. 'Twas aisily known it wasn't the fault of the baste of the field that we were gettin' little or no butter, an' our backs like to break over the churn.'

" 'Maybe,' says I, 'you may be wrongin' the girl.'

" Hersel' flew at me for that an' wanted to make out I was standin' up for them that were robbin' me. So I left her and the Leprechaun there to finish the butter an' went out to me work full of black thoughts of Maura Lally.

" After the cup o' tay in the evenin' an' a slice of the new-made butter on a fine big cake hersel' made, we sat down be the fire. an' the Leprechaun along with us. He let some of the drollest talk ye ever heard out of him, an' when hersel' drew down about the butter 'an Maura Lally, he only looked at the cat. Every time he looked at the cat she'd stick up her tail as straight as a lamp-post an' look back at him, just the same as she did when she walked in the front door. I began to feel very quare about that same cat from that hour.

" ' 'Twas very quare o' Maura Lally entirely,' hersel' would say, 'an' me never to drame of the like.'

" ' 'Tis many a quarer thing,' says the Leprechaun, at last, 'of Maura Lally ye never drame of, an', as sure as I have me back up agin the haycock if he didn't look up one sharp look at mesel', as he said the words. At the same minute the cat turns round an' looks at me, too, an' her tail up. I knew hersel' looked a quare look from the Leprechaun to me, an' from that to the cat, an' who could

blame me if every ounce of blood went up to me head?'

" 'Go down to the divil out of that, ye blasted baste,' says I, in me anger, givin' the cat a swipe off the chair she was standin' on. She fell off, an' as she did, the Leprechaun fell off his stool the other side of the fire.

" 'You needn't be frightenin' the people, Tom Kelleher,' says he, gettin' up. 'I thought 'twas mesel' you ruz your hand to.'

" ' 'Twas only the baste there,' says I, pickin' up the tongs an' beginnin' to make figures in the ashes, for I felt the eyes of hersel' on me all the time, an' they shinin' in her head.

" 'Aye,' says the oul' Leprechaun, ' 'tis the quare world entirely, an' it's the quare doin's that do be in it, sure enough, Mrs. Kelleher.' He shook his head an' looked kind of sorraful into the fire. 'Them,' says he, 'that puts between people an' the bastes they have on their fields won't be short doin' more nor that.'

" I gripped the tongs very tight in me hands, an' to this mortal minute I don't know what kep' me from the murder of man an' baste with it.

" But the Leprechaun went on to talk about the fairies he used to be with, an' gave the story of the Princess he was to marry, word for word as he had it in the drame I had.

" The night passed an' the moon got up. Hersel' got on her cloak, an' said we wouldn't be keepin' him any longer, an' that she'd be goin' to the oul' bush with him for the crock of goold he promised. He didn't seem to like the notion, but got up to go.

" I went to one side with Hersel' when she was getting the spade, an', says I, 'Maybe, Mary Ellen,' says I,

“ ‘twould be bettther, in the name of God, for ye to be lettin’ me go for the goold.’

“ ‘No, Tom,’ says she, it wouldn’t. Ye have no gumption at all in ye, an’ the drame came to ye as a warnin’. Ye have no gumption, an’ I always said it.’

“ ‘Well,’ says I, for I didn’t like to let her out that hour of the night with that imp be hersel’. Well,’ I says, ‘can’t the both of us be goin’?’

“ ‘No, we can’t,’ says she, for I heard me grandmother sayin’ once that there’s no luck with a Leprechaun when there’s two people in it.’

“ So off she goes with the Leprechaun an’ the spade under her cloak. ’Twas a fine bright night, an’ I warned her the last thing not take her eyes off him until she had the crock dug.

“ I kep’ mopin’ around the place, waitin’ an’ feelin’ like a hen on a hot griddle. I was cursin’ Maura Lally in me own mind, an’ when I thought of the oul’ cat I went into the house, caught her be the back of the neck an’ threw her out in the street.

“ About an hour or so was gone, an’ I was lanin’ over the gate lookin’ over the country, an’ not a sound or a sign of a thing in it an’ the moon shinin’ when, lo an’ behold, all of a clap the strawberry bullock comes chargin’ like a trooper up the haggard. An’ I thought the sight would lave me eyes, when who comes runnin’ up after him but hersel’ an’ her cloak flyin’ from her shoulders, an’ the spade an’ it up. Like a pikeman she looked after a yeoman. She was roarin’ meelia murdhers out of her; an’ the baste an’ he snortin’ an’ steam comin’ up out of his nostrils, ploughin’ and jumpin’ with fear from her.

“ I ran down to her an’ the sorra stop she’d stop, but after him and she shouting ‘Oh may every ill luck

light on your dirty hide, ye murdherin' baste, ye bullock o' perdition, ye misfortunate four-footed divil. Oh, oh, oh !'

"In the end I had to catch the spade out of her hand, an' stop her before she ran hersel' an' the baste to death's door over the haggard.

" 'Oh, then, Mary Ellen,' says I, 'what in the world came over ye ?'

"An' then she walks fair an' aisy, pantin', into the house an' sits down as wake as a cat on a chair.

Cryin', she started, when she got her breath. "Misfortune,' says she, 'to the hour ye walked into me with yer Leprechaun. Me heart is broke entirely this night an' that baste'll be the death of me. To think of me fine crock of goold that I'd have this mortal minute, an' into the bank I'd be with every halfpenny of it. An' now, here, we are, poorer nor ever, an' me fine mug with the blue rims upon it, an' it no more with yeself an' yer Leprechaun, the chate o' the divil, for that's what he is. 'Tom Kelleher,' says she, 'I'll never forgive ye for me fine mug with the blue rims upon it if I was to live to see the edge of the world an' ten acres beyond it.'

"An' it took the best part of a week before she'd tell me what come over her. But as the night is comin' on, an' likewise a shower, we'll be goin' home for the night.'

"Several of the youngsters around the haycock, 'mid the new-mown hay, grumbled.

" 'Arrah,' Tom,' says one of them, 'just tell us where the Leprechaun went to at all, an' how he got out of hersel' in the world.'

" 'Here's the rain, bedad,' says Tom, gettin' up. 'An' it's to-morra night ye'll be hearin' all about it.'

"And we had all to be content, and to run for home out of the rain."

III. The Last of Martin Moran.

“ ‘ Now, ‘ Tom,’ said one of the gossuns, who was swinging out of the sugaun that bound one of the cocks in the meadow—‘ Now, ‘ Thom, it’s tellin’ us you’ll be how in the world the Leprechaun got the upper hand of hersel’, long life to her !’

“ ‘ We were all assembled ’ and oul’ Tom Kelleher was lighting his pipe with quiet satisfaction, for his audience was increasing. It had gone around the parish of Killmeen like wildfire of how Tom gave the story out about the wife and the Leprechaun, and we were all dying to know how in the earthly world wide the Leprechaun got the better of her.

“ ‘ Where’s this I was ? ’ says Tom, blowing a great big blue puff of smoke with princely contentment out of the mouth of him.

“ ‘ You were just where hersel’ came back without either goold or Leprechaun,’ said Sean Burke, for Sean was always the quickest with his hand up at school when the teacher gave out a question.

“ ‘ An’,’ added Peadar Molloy, who was a dangerous rival of Sean’s—‘ an’ where she was after the bullock in the paddock.’

“ ‘ An’ where she lamented the mug with the blue rims upon it,’ Tom Slattery put in, thoughtfully.

" 'Aye,' says Tom, 'that's where I was, sure enough, but before I move another inch you'll be comin' down off the cock, Billy O'Meara, an' not be destroyin' the hay we had such botheration with.'

" Several arms shot out at once for the refractory Billy, and he was pulled down rather rapidly by the long, bare legs, a kindly neighbour whipping the cap off him and giving him a couple of wallops of it on the red head to emphasise his advice of 'learnin' how to behave himsel' an' the dacent man goin' to give out the finest story that was ever heard in the thirty-two counties an' as many more if they were in it.'

" ' 'Twas be bits an' scraps,' said oul' Tom Kelleher, 'that I got it out of hersel,' an' I can only tell ye what she told mesel'.'

" 'When she started out with the Leprechaun an' the cloak about her she just says to him, 'You'll be walkin' straight afore me an' you'll be not goin' either too fast or too slow until we come to the oul' bush where the crock is.'

" 'All right, Mrs. Kelleher, ma'am,' says the Leprechaun, steppin' out afore her, 'an' it's a fine night that's in it, thanks be to God.' Down along the haggard he took, an' she after him.

" 'An',' says hersel', 'they'll be no racin' or runnin' over it. If you want any antics of the like,' she says, 'it's what I'll have to be givin' you a palthog of the spade.' And she took the spade out from under her cloak to let him see she would have it handy in case anything of the like turnin' up.

" 'They'll be no racin' or runnin',' he says, 'an' all ye'll want of the spade is to be diggin' up the crock for yoursel' an' that man of yours.'

“ ‘ Good little man,’ says hersel’.

“ ‘ An’ let us be hopin’,’ says the Leprechaun, ‘ that when ye have yer gold there’ll be none of the neighbours wantin’ to go between ye.’

“ With that the Leprechaun turns round, an’, lookin’ over the head of hersel’, says, ‘ Well, now, but that’s the quare sight.’

“ ‘ It is, sure enough,’ says hersel’, lookin’ at the Leprechaun in the oul’ face in the light of the moon.

“ ‘ Crows flyin’ this hour of the night,’ says the Leprechaun.

“ ‘ Aye,’ says hersel’. ‘ They do be late sometimes goin’ to the rookeries. But we’ll be goin’ on now, if you plase. We can be lookin’ at the crows some other time.’

“ The Leprechaun stepped on, findin’ that his little game didn’t work. He was on for gettin’ the eyes of hersel’ off of him. When they come to the end of the haggard the Leprechaun was climbing up on the ditch to get out on the road, when he turned around again. ‘ Don’t think, Mrs. Kelleher,’ says he, ‘ that I want to be gettin’ out of givin’ you your crock. We haven’t very far to go, now. Just,’ says he, ‘ before we go out on the road I want to be puttin’ ye on yer guard agin some of the neighbours. As I said within in the house them that puts between you an’ your baste on the field will be on for doin’ more than that. When,’ says he, risin’ up one of his hands like a priest preachin’ on the altar, an’ he standin’ up on the ditch, ‘ when,’ he says, ‘ you and yer man have lashin’s of money the injucement ’ll be all the more. People that can put an evil eye on yer butter in the churn,’ he says, ‘ can put an evil eye on yer money in the bank.’

“ Hersel’ was dyin’ all the time to know what he meant about Maura Lally, but didn’t like to be askin’ him. She

was willin' to pay half the money in the crock to find out if there was anything between her man, an' Maura, because 'twas goin' through her head like a bad drame that she heard some talk about Maura's match goin' to be made with someone before she come from Peterswell to house-keep in Killmeen. She began to think that maybe it was with mesel'—Tom Kelleher—that the match was to be made before I got married.

"She was just tryin' to make up her mind would she be askin' him when the Leprechaun looked down on the grass where she was standin', an' called out: 'Mind the big rat, Mrs. Kelleher, ma'am.' Well, if there's one thing in the world that hersel' can't abide it's a rat, so she let a leap out of her, but had just thought enough to keep her eyes on the Leprechaun.

" 'Where?' says she, leapin' up.

" 'Oh, there,' says he, very concerned-like, lookin' at the ground.

" 'You lie,' says she, but she gave another leap.

" 'Oh, mind yoursel', Mrs. Kelleher,' says he, 'an awful size of a rat.'

"She thought, sure enough, that she felt the rat comin' near her, so she gave another leap, an' the Leprechaun kep' shoutin', 'Oh!' every time she leaped, an' he lookin' at the ground. For a quarter of an hour he kep' her leapin' around the place, but the sorra eye she took off of him in the height of all her trouble. She felt gettin' wake an' sick at the thought of the rat hoppin' under her feet, an' every time she'd make an offer to jump up on the ditch the Leprechaun would shout, 'Oh, you'll leap on him, Mrs. Kelleher, an' he'll be bitin' the legs off you.' She could never take the ditch in the one spring on account of the weight of the spade, an' she kep' jumpin'

around as well as she could. Rat or no rat she wasn't goin' to let out of her spade or take her eyes off the Leprechaun, an' what she suffered no one will ever know.

"At last the Leprechaun says, 'He's gone into a hole in the ditch. Don't be distressin' yoursel', ma'am, an' she gave up the leapin' an' scrambled up on the ditch, not worth a farthin'.

"'I'll be restin' here for a bit,' she says, pantin', 'before we go for the crock, but no more of your antics. While I'm restin',' says she, 'tell me what you know about Maura Lally'.

"Even while she was leapin' from the rat 'twas Maura Lally that was goin' through her head, however it was; she began to think that if they came to the bush that the Leprechaun would point it out to her, and then disappear, an' maybe she'd never know about Maura. She said to hersel' that 'twas the best of her play to find out first, and then get the crock.

"'Well,' says the Leprechaun, 'you didn't believe me about the butter at first, but when you did what you were told you soon found out for yoursel'. Maura Lally,' says he, 'is no great shakes.'

"'Throth, an' she's not,' says hersel'.

"'Hersel' an' her toothaches, the whipster,' says the Leprechaun.

"'She's a whipster, sure enough,' says hersel'.

"'Tis the like of her, anyway,' says the Leprechaun, 'that'd be interferin' with dacent people, up from Peterswell for hersel'. " 'I won't be without tellin' her so' says herself', and she felt gettin' madder an' madder over Maura Lally.

"'Did ye mind now,' says the Leprechaun, very

knowin', 'how yer man reddened up, ma'am, in the house within, when I spoke of her?'

" 'I did, then,' she says.

" 'An' how he hit the poor, harmless baste of a cat?'

" 'He did.'

" 'An' how he made figures with the tongs in the ashes so quare-lookin'.?'

" 'Sure enough.'

" 'An' looked like as if he was on for slaughterin' people?'

" 'Aye.'

" 'An' how he wanted to back Maura up after he seein' how she interfered with the butter?'

" 'True for ye.'

" 'Well,' says the Leprechaun, 'no woman with an ounce of blood in her would put up with that, an' the Shea's had always blood in them.'

" 'Hersel' was feelin' her temper risin'. The Shea blood was up an' no mistake. 'But,' she says, 'Tom Kelleher,' she says, 'was always a good man to me.'

" 'To be sure he was,' says the Leprechaun. 'Sure, the dacent man,' says he, 'is as innocent as the child unborn, but it's that whipster from Peterswell that's on for the ruination of him.'

" 'Hersel' was very glad to hear this, but it only made her all the blacker agin Maura Lally. She felt every ounce of blood in her veins boilin', an' she was longin' for the minute to face her an' lay the track of either her tongue or her hands on her for ever.

" 'Kettled,' says the Leprechaun, 'she should be, an' whipped out of the parish of Killmeen to where she came from.'

“ ‘ Hangin’ ,’ says hersel’ , ‘ would be too good for the like of her.’

“ ‘ Oh, glory be to the Great Goodness,’ says the Leprechaun, all of a sudden, ‘ but will you look at who is comin’ down the haggard towards us ? ’

“ Hersel’ felt the footsteps comin’ down the haggard, but she just recollected in time not to look round. The steps were comin’ behind her, and the Leprechaun, as he stood in the ditch before her, was lookin’ across her shoulder at whoever was in it. The steps were comin’ very slow and soft on the grass.

“ ‘ Who is it ? ’ says hersel’ . ‘ Well,’ says the Leprechaun, an’ he looking up the haggard, ‘ well, sure enough, I often heard tell that if you spoke of an angel she’s sure to appear, but bad manners to the such an angel as this is was never heard of before.’

“ ‘ Who is it, now ? ’ says hersel’ ? ’

“ ‘ Who you know,’ says he.

“ ‘ Who might that be ? ’ says she.

“ ‘ Maura,’ says he.

“ ‘ Maura Lally, is it ? ’ says she, an’ the blood runnin’ up her head.

“ ‘ The same,’ says he. ‘ I wonder what the whipster is up to ? ’

“ ‘ It’s hard to say,’ says hersel’ ,

“ ‘ True for you, says the Leprechaun, ‘ but whatever the whipster is up to its her characther that should be read out for her.’

“ The steps came down along, an’ the blood was gettin’ up in hersel’ rightly. She listened, an’ sure enough she said ‘twas mortal like Maura’s footsteps.

“ ‘ She sees us,’ says the Leprechaun. ‘ An’ ,’ he says, ‘ more than likely she’ll want to have a say in your crock as well as your churn, an’ your man.’

"Between the jumpin' from the rat an' the black thoughts the Leprechaun was puttin' into her heart of Maura Lally, hersel' was in a bad way enough, but when she heard of her goin' to have a say in the crock of goold she got into the tanthrums altogether. 'Not a farthin',' hersel' was startin' to say, when the Leprechaun took off his mushroom hat as he stood on the ditch, an' curtesyin' down, says, 'God save ye, Maura Lally. You're welcome now. Mesel' an' Mrs. Kelleher here,' says he, 'were just spakin' of ye. We were just sayin' that 'twas a mortal shame for the neuralgia not to be lavin' a nice, dacent, neighbourly girl like ye alone, an' Mrs. Kelleher here was thinkin' of bringin' ye down her bottle afeard ye'd have any more of the pains to-night.'

"Hersel' felt the steps glidin' up to her, but she never stirred, only that her grip on the spade tightened.

"The Leprechaun then bent suddenly down an' whispered to hersel' : 'The evil eyes of her are shinin' in her head like fire. Take care she's not on for doin' away with ye. There's no sayin' what the like of her 'd be on for now. She'd have yer house an' home an' goold an' man if ye were put out of the way nice an' quiet of a night. Oh, Lord!' An' as he said the last word, he jumped up.

"At the same minute hersel' felt the hot breath of a person in a terrible passion blowin' on her neck as the person came up behind her. Maura Lally was on for the death of her. She couldn't stand her any longer. Flesh an' blood couldn't stand it, an' hersel' said she had the spade when it came to that.

"So hersel' just up with the spade in a timper, wheeled roun', cryin', 'Well, Maura Lally, ye night-walker, an' daylight robber, do you think——'

“An’ when she turned round there was the two big eyes of the strawberry bullock lookin’ wondherin’ at her, an’ he blowin’ the breath out of him as bullocks do. Hersel’ let the spade fall.

“ ‘Well, ye deludherin’ imp,’ says she, turnin’ back to the Leprechaun on the ditch, but, lo an’ behold, there wasn’t trace nor tidin’s of him high up or low down. Nothin’ only the moon shinin’ down on the peaceful parish o’ Killmeen, an’ all the people in it sound asleep in their beds.

“Hersel’ had like to have her head turned when she thought of how she was done out of her goold be the Leprechaun, so she up with the spade agin, made one leap at the bullock, an’ took up the haggard after him like a hound after a hare, an’ there she was roarin’ an’ runnin’ after him when I took her in mesel’ to the house, an’ she more dead than alive. Sorra bit I could do for days after, for she never stopped grievin’ an’ lamentin’ over her mug an’ the black thoughts the Leprechaun put into her head about Maura Lally.

“ ‘To think of me,’ she’d say, ‘an’ I makin’ across the floor with me mug with the blue rims upon it an’ to go let it drop out of me hands for a corrahaun of a fairy that never stopped lyin’ an’ malafustherin’ me from once he came into me house until he went out again—och, sure it’s enough to be a warnin’ to the world for ever an’ a day. An’ there I was, she’d say, ‘an’ I ready to b’lieve the worst that could be of an innocent slob of a craythur like Maura Lally, an’ nothin’ worse amiss with her than the neuralgia that she was mad with, an’ never to dhrame of the limb of the divil makin’ it all up to give me the slip. Oh, then, oh, then, oh, then,’ she’d cry, rockin’ hersel’ on her chair like a

woman keenin', ' if I could lay me two hands on him at all, at all ! ' '

" An' then she'd be down to Maura Lally every day a couple of times to know were her teeth at her, an' if they were she'd come flyin' up for the bottle. An' I had me doubts that she brought down a good lump of the butther to Maura an' some of the eggs we had over an' above, an' signs on Maura used to say to the neighbours that a more spirited woman never drew breath in Killmeen than Mrs. Tom Kelleher.

" Well, I didn't say nothin' much mesel' only listened to all hersel' had to say, for once or twice when I made an offer to give her a bit of advice she'd throw the mug with the blue rims upon it at me an' then I'd have to be goin' out to look after the calves or the like. I'd have it be known to ye all that the worst thing a man ever did is to begin to argue with his woman, an' if he can't stand it the finest thing in the world is to take nice an' quiet out of the house an' do a hand's turn around the place an' everythin' 'll be right be the time ye come back again.

" But although I had next to nothin' to say, I used to lay awake on the broad of me back many a night thinkin' of the Leprechaun an' wonderin' to mesel' if I'd ever get a chance of him again. I said to mesel' that if ever I did I'd take him up in me hands an' break him across me knee like you'd break a long sod of turf an' throw the two halves of him into the swamp—near the fort. I didn't care if he gave me forty crocks of goold I'd have me revenge out of him.

" Well, about a couple of weeks after—just two days after poor Martin Moran dyin' of the fever—the heavens be his bed, this night !—I was takin' a walk down be the Borheen, an' just as I stepped out of it into Keating's

callows the sight was scattered out of me eyes be what I saw. Over at the rise where the creggs are I saw something dartin' about, runnin' from one cregg to another an' hidin' behind them. When I got me sight together I could see as plain as the nose on me face what it was. 'Twas the Leprechaun agin! His back was towards me, an' I could see be the leapin' an' dartin' about of him that 'twas hidin' from someone he was. After a bit who comes walkin' across farther up the hill but Maura Lally, an' her shawl across her shoulders. I could see be her that she didn't spot the Leprechaun, an' that he was runnin' from one cregg to another so as to get to the bottom of the hill without being seen, an' that if he got to the end of them he'd get over the ditch an' cut along away the other side of it. So I just stepped back and crouched down at the end of the ditch at the mouth of the borheen an' waited.

"It wasn't very long until I heard the patter, patter, patter of small feet comin' along, an' while you'd be sayin' trap-stick the Leprechaun come chargin' along the ditch, an' turnin' round to make up the borheen, he ran clane an' dacent into me own two arms.

"For one second I pressed him to me bosom, as if he was the child of me heart. 'Oh' says I, squeezin' him hard.

"'Damn ye!' says he, kickin' with his little feet an' clawin' me in the face with his hands like a wild cat.

"I held him back a bit then in me arms, an' we gave each other one solid, square, look. It was the same Leprechaun. I knew every twist in the lines of his oul' wizened face. 'An' is that yoursel'?' says I.

"'Blast ye, Kelleher,' says he.

"'Mr. Leprechaun,' says I, 'don't be cursin' at all now. If I was you,' says I, 'it's prayin' I'd be for it's

a dead man you'll be here in the borheen before five minutes.'

" 'Aye,' says he, ' I was often thinkin' Tom Kelleher's neck was made for a rope an' his hands for a pinion an' his feet, the kind o' feet that'd one day walk out on a plank ! '

" ' I'm no murdherer,' says I, lavin' him down on his feet, but holdin' one of his arms, ' but,' says I, ' you limb of the devil, you'll drive me to it.'

" ' Throth an' I won't then, Tom Kelleher,' says he, an' although I could see be him that he could hang me for havin' landed him so natelly, that he wasn't one bit afraid of me.

" ' You could no more murder me,' says he, ' than you could shoot that flock of wild duck passin' over our heads above be coughin' at them.'

" ' 'Tis many a wild duck I shot in me days,' says I, for I couldn't think of anything else to say, the oul' eyes of him so bothered me.

" ' 'Tis the kind of ye to be a good shot, Tom Kelleher,' says he. ' Your grandfather,' says he, ' shot six redcoats out of eight bullets near Killala, an' ran six miles with a pike in his hand after them without a break. An' when he come up upon a sergeant that fell under a bush an' his tongue out as long as a fox-hound's after the chase, he up with the pike to put his heart out to keep his tongue company. An' as he up with the pike over the stretched sergeant, the sergeant says, ' water, a drink of water for God's sake,' an' at the words your grandfather left the pike down on the green sod instead of his heart. I saw him as I stood mesel' behind a hawthorn bush. The pike went half a foot into the ground, an' as it did a quiver went over the body of the sergeant like the quiver of death. Well, there was a stream of water close by, an' your grandfather went

to it, an' stooped down to take up a drink of water for the sergeant in his hat. His back was towards the sergeant, an' as he stooped down, the redcoat put out his hand, drew the pike up out of the earth, got on his knees an' took aim at your grandfather's back. He let fly but the pike went a yard over his head, for no redcoat knew how to handle a pike, not to talk of how to throw it. Your grandfather jumped up an' the water streamin' out of his hands an' as he did the sergeant fell out on his face on the grass. Your grandfather took the pike with an oath, an', turnin' round saw the sergeant lyin' on his face. He up with the pike to make an end of him, then stopped, for he didn't want to kill a stretched man. Instead, he turned the red-coat over on his back with his foot. When the sergeant rolled over on his back there was a stream of blood out of his mouth, and his eyes were sightless as they turned up to the sky. He was stark dead.'

" I let out of the Leprechaun as he told the story, an' looked at him. To be sure I knew that me grandfather fought at Killala, and chased the red-coats at the Castlebar Races, but I never heard' this story before.

" ' Is that the truth you're tellin' me ? ' says I.

" ' Gospel,' says he.

" ' An'.' says I, ' you could call the grandson of that pikeman a murderher ? '

" The Leprechaun only laughed. ' Well, well, T'om Kelleher, boy,' says he, ' will you ever learn when 'tis I'm jokin' you ? Sure it's because I know all about you an' yours that I know you could no more harm a hair on a poor little craythur's head like me than you would fly to the moon.'

" I hung down me head at this, I own. It was the gospel truth. Whatever quare thoughts I might have of a

night on me back in bed sure they went away with the first streak of light in the mornin'. But if I hung me head itself, I kep' an eye on the Leprechaun. 'Give me your hand for what you tell me of me grandfather,' says I, an' there I was, shakin' hands with the imp!

" 'Aye,' says the Leprechaun, 'he was the man to be proud of. But,' says he, 'sure he was nothin' at all to your great grandfather.'

" 'He wasn't?' says I.

" 'No, he wasn't,' says he. 'At laste he wasn't any-thing to him in the way of shootin'. 'Twas the wild duck that called him to mind, so it was. He was the greatest shot that was ever in Killmeen or that'll ever be in it agin. One night he was sittin' be his fire with some of the boys around him, an' big pot of boilin' water on the fire. All of a sudden there was a cry of wild duck passin' overhead, an' your great-grandfather—God be good to him, he's hardly in Purgatory all these years, if he wasn't a saint itself—an' your grandfather, as I was sayin', jumped up an' whipped down the loaded gun that always hung over the chimney. He hadn't time to run out, so he just put his head up the chimney, an' let fly, an' be the time he had stepped out from the chimney, down thunders as purty a goolden-winged mallard as ever bate a wing, shot through the breast, and plunged straight into the pot of boilin' water. So your great grandfather put the lid on the pot, hung up the gun, an' turnin' around to open-mouthed neighbours about him, says, 'Boys,' he says, 'from the width yer gobs are open it must be a great hunger that's upon ye, so we'll make a male of the little duck in the pot before ye go—feathers an' all? He did so, bedad.'

" 'Well, ye imp?' says I.

" 'Oh,' says the Leprechaun, 'he was a great shot en-

tirely was your great grandfather. He was indeed, now. He was nearly as good a shot, I'd say, as your great-great-grandfather was as good a warrant to leap. The Kellehers were always a wonderful kind of family. Your great-great-grandfather, as I say, Tom, was the warrant to leap. There wasn't a drain or dyke or stream or river ever known, made or seen that he couldn't take in the one leap. He was travellin' over the country one time, an' met a man near the Shannon. Over the Shannon bridge this happened. I was looking at it mesel', so I was. When they come to the river the man says to your great-great-grandfather, 'Blood-an'-ouns, Kelleher, but you're bate at last. You'll never try to leap the Shannon,' says he.

" 'What'll you bet?' says your great-great-grandfather. 'I'll bet every thraneen I'm worth,' says the man, 'which,' says he, 'is a fourpenny bit.'

" 'Done!' says your great-great-grandfather, an' he peeled off his coat, spat on his fists, wiped the dust off his boots an' took a runnin' race at the Shannon. He flew from the bank like a shot of a gun, an' went up over the water. Well, when he was quarter way across he saw he couldn't clear it an' that he'd flop into the water, an' as he was a man that never liked water, he just wheeled around in the air, an' landed back on the bank he started from again!

" 'Oh, honey,' says I, 'so me great-great-grandfather was bate as great a warrant as he was to leap?'

" 'How daar ye!' says the Leprechaun. 'How daar ye, Tom Kelleher, put disparagement on yer leapin' great-great-grandfather. He was not bate. He won, for his bet was that he'd 'try' to leap the Shannon, an' so he did.'

" 'Them was great times entirely, now,' says I.

" 'They were,' says he. 'But I saw quare leapin' in me

days. I saw bigger leaps than ever yer great-great-grand father did.'

" ' Bedad,' says I, ' it's yoursel' that's in the humour for tellin' the jokes.' But I was beginnin' to think to mesel' that 'twould be too good a joke to let the Leprechaun get the better of me agin, an' I said to mesel' that the best joke for me, an' the worst for him, would be to make him land out the crock this time in earnest. 'Tis the best kind of a joke, too, that would go down with hersel'. Sure if I could plant down the crock on the table to her, an' it bustin' with goold, she'd be laughin' all the dear days of her life. She would so, now, an' mesel', too, would be aisier to take a laugh out of. An' I wanted to have satisfactioun of some kind out of the Leprechaun for all the trouble he brought on us.'

" ' Aye,' says the Leprechaun, cockin' his oul' head to one side, an' the eyes of him shinin'. ' Aye, Tom, the Kellehers were always the great family, sure enough. There was that great-great-great grandfather of yours who was the wondher of the world of a runner.'

" ' Aye,' says I, ' so he was, sure enough. But we'll be just lettin' the dacent man rest nice an' quiet in his clay. He's entitled to a good rest under the daisies after all of them he ever run on top of. An', says I, ' if it be plazin' to you, we'll come down from me great-great-great grandfather to his great-great-great grandson. The crock ! 'I cried, with a sudden loud cry, an' as I did, I jumped up, caught him be the arm, an' glared at him. The Leprechaun stamped one of his wee feet in anger. ' More of the maneness,' says he. ' When people hear a couple of good ones an' they goin' to hear better ones, they haven't the common dacency to listen to them. The back of me hand to you, Tom Kelleher ! ' says he.

“ ‘After a bit,’ says I. ‘We’ll go for the crock first,’ says I. ‘An’,’ says I, with all the weight I could put into the words, ‘you must walk one yard ahead of me, an’ straight to it. An’ from once we start until we get to it, there’s to be no word spoken, no turnin’ to the right or to the left, no racin’ this way or that way, no fallin’ back, no sittin’ down, nor no palaverin’ one way or the other.’ ‘Hurry on with you, Kelleher,’ says he. He stepped out an’ I a yard behind him. I gave him one square look before we started an’ let him see there was as good as murder in the heart of me if he went on with any of his antics. He struck along without a hum or a haw out of him be the ditch, up across Keating’s callows, through the creggs, down to the road, and along by it inside the hedge.’

“ ‘Well, we went such a long step of the road at a good, steady rate, for the Leprechaun could make the best use of the two little legs of him I ever saw, that, bedad, I couldn’t but begin to wondher was it up for the Donegal crock he was bringin’ me.’

“ ‘The oul’ bush is a good step,’ says I, just to draw him.

“ ‘The Leprechaun went ten good yards before he up with an answer. ‘Now, now,’ says he, steppin’ on the same steady step, ‘there’s to be no word spoken, no turnin’ to the right or to the left, no racin’ this way, or that way, no fallin’ back, no sittin’ down, nor no palaverin’ one way or the other.’ This was fair enough, so it was, an’ I just says, ‘That’s the talk, sure enough,’ an’ went on after him with me tongue quiet enough in me cheek.

“ ‘Ye all know now where the road at Ballylea takes a sudden turn around to the north as it goes into the bog

road just up be the Widda Nolan's. Well, the wind was blowin' that way, too, so sharp that I couldn't hear the footsteps of the Leprechaun before me, an' I with me eyes upon him. But just as I rounded the corner I heard the shufflin' of hundreds of feet comin' along the road be the bog, an' the aisy walkin' like of horses under cars. The first thing I thought of doin' was of lookin' out on the road—for me head was just higher than the dyke—but then I thought that the Leprechaun might have an eye in his poll and disappear the mortal minute I'd take mine off him. So I went in a few more yards, wondherin' what the noise was about. Then, bedad, the whole thing came into me head with one sudden slap. It was Martin Moran's funeral that was comin' along, an' that I was forgettin' all about be raison of the Leprechaun.

“ ‘The Lord have mercy on the dead!’ says the Leprechaun the same minute, an' that I may be a haythen if he didn't lift the mushroom hat as he spoke the word. I just lifted me hat, too, an' with me eyes on the Leprechaun, blessed meself, an' says I to mesel', ‘well,’ I says, ‘the Lord have mercy on you, surely, Martin Moran, an' be good to you, an' send you the light of heaven this day, but your crossin' me,’ says I, ‘both dead an' alive over the Leprechaun.’ An' sure if I was to lose all the goold from here to the world's end I couldn't but look out at the funeral. I saw the men an' they bearin' the coffin on their shoulders, an' all the people, men, women, an' childher, walkin' behind it, an' a string of cars behind them a mile of the road. Well, 'twas Martin that had the fine funeral, anyway, an' as I looked at it his poor widda just caught a sight of me in behind the dyke, an' as she did up with the keen. As I towld ye, Martin or me worn't the best o' friends, an' the widda, natural enough, felt the sight of me

so quare behind the ditch. An' sure if it was the blackest stranger that was in it, I couldn't let the funeral pass me by without joinin' it, an' I wasn't goin' to bring disgrace on all that ever belonged to me by lettin' the corpse of a neighbour pass me by in the road. Ye often heard, of coorse, that the man who lets a funeral go by him without turnin' with it for at laist nine steps of the road, will never have luck or grace about him the longest day he ever lives, or his seven generations after him. Well, if I was to get all the crocks of goold that were ever buried in Ireland, or forty Irelands, I wasn't goin' to bring the curse upon me, nor to disrespect the dead of me own parish, especially as the dead an' me weren't friends. Sure, what would the people be sayin' but that Tom Kelleher carried his spite over the grave? So I just gave one look back agin to see was the Leprechaun gone. The sorra gone at all was he! He was walkin' along be the dyke, close in to it, but sure he needn't need to be doin' that, for not one of the people out on the road could see him he was that small.

" 'There's to be no word spoken,' says he, glancin' back over his shoulder at me; 'no turnin' to the right or to the left, no racin' this way or that way, no fallin' back, no sittin' down, nor no palaverin' one way or the other.'

" 'Oh, then,' says I, under me breath, to him, an' the blood boilin' in every vein in me body, 'bitter bad luck to the day I ever saw you, you imp of the devil,' says I, an' with that I took me eyes off of him, left me hand on the dyke, an' put out me foot to go out on the road to join with the funeral of Martin Moran. Before I did so it just flashed across me mind that I might pick the Leprechaun up, bundle him under me coat, an' follow the funeral without lettin' on I had him. But sure, I'd have to chase him for a bit before I could lay hands on him, an' if all

the people at the funeral saw me runnin' along the inside of the ditch they'd be sure to come over to see what was up, an' if they saw the Leprechaun, 'tis as like as not that the corpse would be left on the road an' a scandal be made, the like of which was never known or heard of before. An' what would all belonging' to Martin Moran say but that I did it designedly to put disgrace upon his remains? What goold would make up for the like of that? An' then I said that even if I caught the Leprechaun an' bundled him under me coat the imp would make some kind of a shindy while I was goin' along after the coffin, an' there'd be a bigger disgrace than ever. So, puttin' one thing with another, I said I'd keep me good character an' let the Leprechaun go.

"Just as I put me hand on the top of the ditch to get out on the road, if the Leprechaun didn't run back to me. 'Arra, Tom,' says he, 'sure it isn't goin' from me you are?'

"'Only for respect for the dead,' says I in a whisper back to him, 'I'd take ye an' break the four evil bones of your body.'

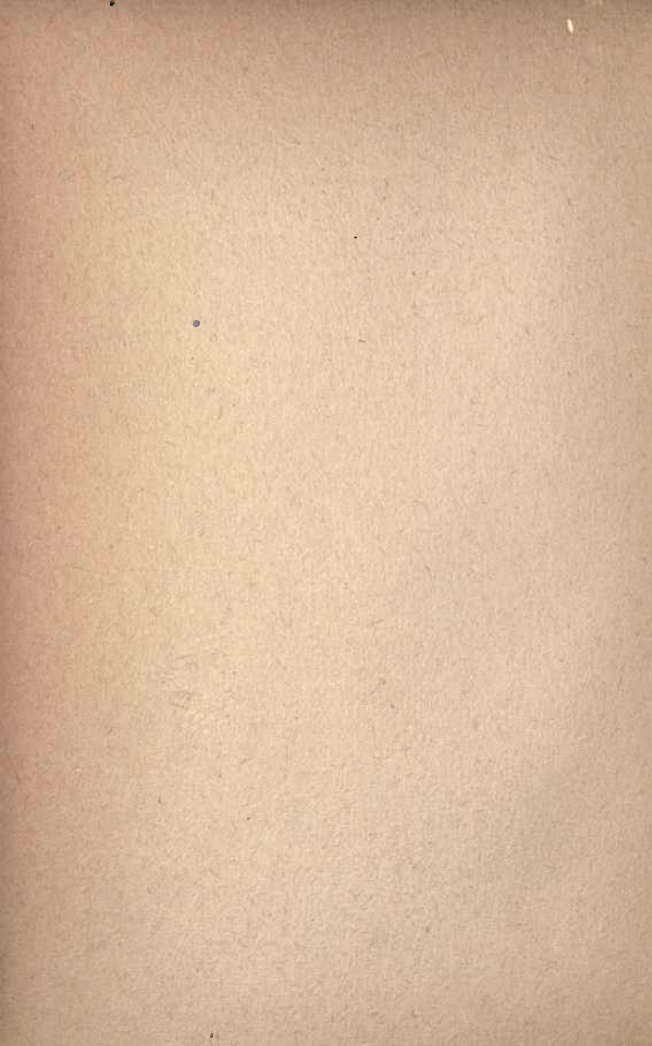
"'Arra, Tom, now,' says he, 'don't be lavin' me like that an' the fine crock of gold I have for ye under the oul' bush.'

"I leaped up on the dyke. 'Tom, Tom,' says he, in another whisper, 'don't be lavin' me an' me goold, and hersel' won't ever be the better of it when she hears it. She'll never do a day's good, an' her mug with the blue rims upon it broke, an' Maura Lally, an' she——'

"But that's all I heard, for I had jumped out on the road as the funeral was up to me, an' I took off me hat in respect of the dead, an' I feelin' that quare that every inch of me was quiverin'.

“ ‘This is very sad,’ says Thady Darmody, of the Cross, as I stepped out with the funeral.

“ ‘ ’Tis a sad case enough, Thady,’ says I. ‘The Lord be good to him,’ says I. ‘But,’ says I to mesel’, ‘but,’ says I, ‘Martin Moran, both sleepin’ an’ wakin’, livin’ an’ dead, is goin’ between me an’ me goold, an’ puttin’ black murder into the heart of me. ‘The Lord have mercy on him, the Lord have mercy on him!’ says I, grindin’ the words through me teeth, an’ sinkin’ the nails of me fingers into the palms of me hands, as I stepped with Thady Darmody up to take a turn under the coffin.”



IV. The Fairy Bush.

“MUSHA, high hanging to Peadar Finnessy an’ the pipe, anyway,” said Sean Dempsy, as we all came home from the meadow, disconsolate and disgusted, the following evening.

“Sure, if we knew about it in time ’twouldn’t be so hard at all to make up between us the price of a couple of ounces of t’baccy,” said Larry MacCormac, and he gave a look at all the bare-legged gossuns as they stepped out behind him. After surveying us all behind him, Larry looked as if he had his doubts about our accumulated wealth risin’ to the price of a couple of ounces that would have saved the situation, and although we all felt thrilled to the most heroic flights of philanthropy we were also very conscious that between us we could not, if peremptorily ordered to do so, produce enough current coin of the realm to jingle on a tombstone, not to talk of as much as would buy a few ounces of t’baccy. And I’ll tell you how the trouble came around over the t’baccy.

“Every evenin’ in the meadow when we had eaten the dinners the women brought us, eaten them with an appetite sharp as the north wind, it was the custom for oul’ Tom Kelleher, the seannachie, to have a comfortable and luxuriant smoke for himself before he resumed the hay-makin’. But to-day he had unfortunately given his

pipe, after fillin' it early in the day to Peadar Finnessey, 'for a couple of draws,' but, lo an' behold, when Tom took out his pipe, for his customary smoke, the sorra bit was in it only a wisp of white ashes at the heel. Tom, to be sure, only blazed up in anger, and wanted to have Peadar's blood 'for the mane deception,' but Peadar, with tactics that would have done credit to a general in the field of battle, managed to do his hay-saving, and at the same time keep a couple of judicious perches between himself and Tom Kelleher. No matter how Tom spat on his fists and flourished the fork, working like a demon to get alongside Peadar, it was of no avail. By the time he'd have his trail along the hay finished Peadar would be somewhere else. 'Twas a regular game of chess between them, and both good hands at the game. And 'twas many a joke the other men and women had over it as they tossed the hay. Martin Hegarty, who owned the meadow, said he never saw two such hasty workers in his life, and that 'twas younger Tom Kelleher was getting every day in the year, he was that light and airy on the foot.

And when the day's work was over one of the gossuns who went up to oul' Tom Kelleher, with the humble petition that he might tell another story, had like to have a hay-fork run through him—the saints between us and all harm.

"G'out of me sight, you torment," shouted Tom. 'It's good work,' he says, 'I'd have to be giving out stories to a parcel of robbers and rogues that'll bring a bad name an' bad luck on the parish, the lot of carra-hauns.'

"So we all knew, then, that we'd have to do without a story that night, and footed it home, nearly as black and glum as Tom Kelleher himsel', though Sean Darmody

said that when Tom started home the only bit of a cloud in the sky moved along with him.

“The day after that Tom Kelleher had a smoke and a half after his dinner. Extensive larcenies were committed all over Killmeen the night before by all the gossuns. Every one of them appeared to have made a burglarious attack on his father's, brother's, or uncle's chunk of t'baccy, as the case might be. On their way down to the meadow next morning they secretly dropped the spoil into Tom's pocket. Oul' Tom let on not to see them, but that was only playing the game. He felt so thoroughly compensated that he received Peadar Finnessy's explanation with the charitable comment that 'if Peadar ever agin contrived to do him out of his pipe of t'baccy that the divil might pull it out of him.' The moderation of oul' Tom's comment will be understood when the lameness of Peadar's explanation is taken into account. That explanation, as far as it could be gathered, was that Peadar smoked the precious pipeful 'all in a quare drame—a quare kind of drame that came into his head that 'twas his own pipe an' own t'baccy that he had between his teeth, an' not Tom Kelleher's, that he might'nt cough ever agin if it didn't, it did so, bedad.'

“But the sorra great delay there was to get Tom to give out a story that evening, the gossuns watching the way he blew out the white puffs of smoke with that interest and admiration born of a personal responsibility for the luxury, the fact of the said personal responsibility being bound up in a larceny which would bring vigorous reprisals when discovered, only adding a greater zest to the philanthropic sensation.

“The day,' said oul' Tom Kelleher, 'that I lost the Leprechaun be reason of the funeral of Martin Moran,

there wasn't a blacker man in all Ireland after I comin' home from the buryin'.

"At the same time I said to mesel' that I'd hould me whisht about the whole transaction, an' that there was no use in talkin' to me woman about it. She'd be only thinkin' over it, an' sayin' that maybe if I done this thing an' that thing an' the other thing that 'tis home I'd have me crock by this, an' it so handy with the year's rint comin' due an' a couple o' gales behind it. What people won't hear won't be troublin' them is an oul' sayin' and a true one. An' there's a better sayin' in the Irish, so there is—'The closed mouth is sweet,' an', says I to mesel', here, I says, is for the sweet mouth anyway. But, bedad, some days after I noticed herself used to be out a good dale an' trappin' over the parish, an' I used to be wonderin' at this, for she was never one that would be on for much cabin-huntin' or the like. When she'd come back the sorra much she'd have to say, an' in the nights when we'd be sittin' be the fire she'd be lookin' into the burnin' sods an' thinkin' an' dramin' away for hersel'. Very quare entirely was she gettin', but I passed no remarks and kep' me mind to mesel'. I knew 'twould be comin' out some fine day, for, ye see, when a woman do be thinkin' an' dramin' she'll keep it to hersel', but when she has all her thinkin' an' dramin' done, an' can't think an' drame any more, out all her cogitation 'll come as sure as there's a tail on a cat.

"Sure enough, one evenin' as we sat be the fire the woman of the house seemed to be gettin' small comfort in the sods of burnin' turf. So she looked across at mesel' an' says she, 'Tom,' she says, 'there's a great'l of bushes in the parish.'

"There is, then, Mary Ellen,' says I.

" An' there's a great'l of fairy bushes in it,' she says.

" No doubt,' says I.

" But I was thinkin' now,' she says, ' that there isn't so many likely bushes in it at all, at all.'

" Mary Ellen,' says I ; ' what's on your mind, woman?'

" Well,' says she, ' I do be lookin' at the bushes around about, an' when I do be goin' by them I do be sayin' that maybe now that's the very oul' bush the Leprechaun has the crock under, an' that if it was sure 'twas a pity not be diggin' for it. An' if it wasn't itsel' sure the sorra great harm could be done, an' I can't rest aisy thinkin' of it.'

" Well, I thought, for a bit, an' I was ready to make a moan, for I said to mesel' that since the day I left an eye on the Leprechaun we hadn't neither me nor her an' hour's peace of mind, an' that the goold was goin' between us an' our night's rest.

" For the sake of all ever that went before you, Mary Ellen,' says I, ' don't be askin' me to go out an' dig around all the bushes in the parish.'

" Throth, an' I won't,' she says, ' for I was never one Tom Kelleher, to be wantin' you to do an unraysonable turn. But,' she says, ' there's one very likely bush entirely.'

" Where is it ? ' says I.

" I do be lookin' at it an' I goin' the road,' she says, ' an' there do be a little mite of a wran perched upon it an' he chirripin' an' chirripin' an' turnin' this way an' that way an' dartin' down the weeshy head of him an' cockin' up the tail, an' you'd swear it's sayin' he'd be, ' There it is, there it is, there it is,' an' the head of him noddin' down at the ground.'

" Where's this bush ? ' says I.

" It's likely enough it's a foolish notion,' she says

'but them wrans are the knownist birdeens out, an' if it went to that it's many a greater thing birds told, since the white dove brought the news to the Ark, when it was floatin' upon the flood.'

"Where's the bush?' I says again.

"An' I do be thinkin', she says, 'that maybe it's many a thing the same birdeens do be sayin' in the bushes if we could be understandin' them, an' see how they can be talkin' to each other.'

"The bush, Mary Ellen,' says I, 'where's the bush?'

"Them swallows, now,' she says, 'them do see the hawk comin' an' they do screech an' screech, an', as soon as they do, all the other birds do be hidin' here an' there, shiverin' in every inch of them, an' the sorra move or note out of them till the swallows drive the hawk out of the place——'

"But the bush, Mary Ellen,' says I, 'where's the bush?'

"Well,' says she, 'what's more than that, there was one night an' I dreamt four times, one after the other, that 'twas at this bush the crock was buried, an' that when we went for to dig it there was the wran on the bush, only he was as big as a turkey-cock, an' that when we dug out the crock it was only the size of a timble, an' that the heart broke within in me, an' I went straight home an' lay down on me bed an' died dead. Then I wakened up.'

"Mary Ellen,' says I, 'when you're done romancin' about birds an' drames, an' the like, you might be just sayin' one little word about the oul' bush—the oul' fairy bush where the crock is.'

"Then,' she says, 'there was another evenin', an' when I was comin' up the road an' the wran an' he——'

"All right, woman," says I, "You can be discoorsin' to the cat there about the gayneyology of all the birds in the air, all the fishes in the say, an' all the bastes upon the land, while I'm out puttin' down an armful of hay from the loft to the mare, an' when I do a few other things about the place you might be round to the bush agin I come in."

"Sit down there, Tom Kelleher," says she. "The mare has more hay in the manger than'd fill the belly of six like her. The bush is below just at the rise as you go in off the road to the four-acre field at Ballynamona."

"That's on Tom Donohoe's land," says I, "an' Tom Donohoe isn't the one to let any mortal man interfere with his land."

"Small blame to him," says she, "an' if others was like him maybe it isn't lookin' for Leprechauns' crocks they'd need to be. But," she says, "it isn't Ned Donohoe's land at all. It's a waste bit up against his mearin', an' belongs to the Grand Jury, no less, an' the Grand Jury isn't goin' to be watchin' itself an' the bit of a bush."

"Mary Ellen," says I, "you're the wondherfullest woman that ever stood in shoe leather, so you are, an' maybe, after all, the Leprechaun hasn't got the upper hand of you."

"An' sure enough, every day she'd be talkin' about the Grand Jury's fairy bush, an' it was wearin' the life an' heart out of her to have the diggin' done about it. Peace nor contintment would never be under our roof until one fine, bright, harvest moonlight night, down we took to it, with two spades. An', sure enough, it looked a likely enough bush growin' up there on a strip of waste land, an' knots an' twists on every inch of it, it was that oul' an' ancient."

"In the name of God," says I, "here's for it," an' threw off me coat an' put the spade into the green sod, the wife layin' aside her shawl an' takin' at the diggin' with me. I suppose we were up to an hour or more at the work, an' faith, we had a good bit done, when who looked out over the mearin' at us but Tom Donohoe. The night was so fine that he came out for a smoke an' a bit of a walk down the land, when he heard the noise of the diggin' an' came down to see what in the world wide was up at all, at all.

"To tell ye the truth when he looked out at us, I didn't know what I'd say for mesel', an' Tom looked from me to hersel' like as if we had six heads upon us.

"In the name of God," says he at last, "is it takin' lave of yer sinses ye are, Tom Kelleher?"

"Oh," says hersel', "we're only come down to be diggin' this hole just to say what was in it, an' to be closin' it up agin'."

"It's only a little business of our own, Tom Donohoe," says I, "an' doesn't concern anyone at all." At the words he jumped out over the mearin'. "I'll soon let ye see whether it's any concern," he says, double as cross, "to be trespassin' on my land an' rootin' it up an' destroyin' it on me," he says.

"It's the land of the Grand Jury, so it is," says hersel', "an' 'twould be fitter for you, Tom Donohoe, to be goin' home to your bed an' not putting to or from other peoples affairs."

"Both one an' the other of ye g'out of this land of mine, this mortal minute, for a pair of lunatics, or I'll be sendin' for the police," he says.

"How dar ye," says hersel'. "How dar ye be threatenin' police on your neighbours, that hasn't crossed yer

mearin' ? I'm ashamed of ye, Tom Donohoe, that I am she says to him. 'It's no concern of yours.'

" Butsorra foot he'd stir, an' for the len'th of an hour we were in face of him, until down comes his boy, Quickey Raftery, an' after him five or six others that were at a seanathus in the house when they heard the voices rise in anger. Well, they all had a word to say, an' we were all there around the hole dug about the oul' bush for more nor another hour, arguin' out the rights an' the wrongs of it. But sorra agree we could at all about whose land it was—Tom Donohoe claimin' it for his, an' we claimin' it for the Grand Jury, an' hersel' spoke up like any lawyer, she did so. An' sure only the other boys that were there mesel' an' Tom Donohoe'd have struck blows an' fought it out there an' then, but the boys went between us an' hersel' gave Tom one crack of the handle of the spade on the knuckles, an' then Pat Mullins, who was a man everyone respected, up an' said 'twas better for us have the law over it, an' not to have blood between neighbours an' bringin' disgrace upon the parish. An' the other boys said that was the talk, an' caught mesel' an' Tom Donohoe be the back of the necks an', without another word, shoved us along the road home, whether we liked it or not, Hersel' brought up the rere with the two spades, an' she givin' out the law every foot of the road.

" Well, when we found oursel's landed back in the house agin, an' the boys gone away home, after advisin' us, hersel' just sat down be the fire, put her elbows on her knees, caught the apron up to her eyes, and started to give out an ologone that'd do for the wake of a king of Connacht. An' when she'd say anything, an' she rocking hersel' on the stool, 'twould be all about our fine crock, an' the Leprechaun, and Tom Donohoe, an' all belongin' to him.

and misfortunes an' meeahs, an' her fine mug with the blue rims upon it, an' Maura Lally that never did a wrong turn.

"So I left her there an' went to me bed, an' I own it that the last prayer I said that night before I closed an eye was, 'Well, wherever the Leprechaun is this night, may the Lord stiffen him, anyway!'

"The day after that there wasn't a man, woman, or child in the parish of Killmeen, or in three parishes every side of it, but was talkin' about the quare, foolish turn of the Kelleher's to go out diggin' a hole at the dead hour of the night around an oul' bush, an' all but havin' murder with Tom Donohoe over it. An' moreover, nothin' would do any of them but to be up to look at the hole that was dug, an' to be sittin' on the mearin' lookin' at it an' wonderin' in the world what 'twas dug at all for. There wasn't an hour or minute of the day or night that there wouldn't be a crowd of spalpeens around the place. Some said 'twas only a quare soort of frake of the Kelleher's, but that if it went to that there was never any madness in the Kelleher family that anyone in Killmeen ever heard tell of, an' the Kellehers was always in Killmeen since longer than anyone could go back to. Another said that 'twas maybe the Kellehers wanted law with Tom Donohoe, because a second cousin of the Donohoes in ancient times fell out with a maiden aunt of the Kellehers over the luck pinny at a fair. But an oul' man that was up to a hundred year every day an' come up to see the hole on two crutches, said that was never it at all, but that 'twas more likely that 'twas on the wife's side, for Mrs. Kelleher's people were of the Sheas, an' there was a boy of the Shea's, long before the night of the Big Wind, an' he used to be visitin' up at the Donohoe's, an' there was a niece of the Donohoe's in the house, as fine a cailin

as ever walked the road, an' young Shea an' hersel' ran away together an' were never heard of after. The Shea's blamed the Donohoe's, and the Donohoe's blamed the Shea's for it, an' as like as not 'twas that same turn that was goin' through the heads of the Kelleher's agin' the Donohoe's. An oul' woman that was there another time said that whatever the Kelleher's dug the hole for they had luck and grace not to interfere with the fairy bush, for if they did, an hour's blessin' would never be upon them, an' every baste they had outside the door would pine an' die an' lave them beggars.

"An' as sure as I tell ye I couldn't go anywhere but the women would be out to their doors to look after me, the same as if they never saw me in the parish before, an' they'd be sayin': 'There's Tom Kelleher down,' or 'There he is, bedad,' or 'Wethen, who'd ever think the like of him now to see him goin' the road.' An' all day the women'd be comin' up to see hersel' an' try to get out of her all about the diggin' of the hole, but although she'd discourse with them neighbourly enough the sorra much information she'd give them.

"One night a rumour went round that 'twas a horrible murder the Kellehers committed of some foreign-lookin' man with long ear-rings upon him, an' big goold rings on his fingers, an' that they were just diggin' the hole to throw the dead body into when Tom Donohoe caught them red-handed; and that six peelers come out from town an' put handcuffs upon the Kellehers an' brought them off to jail to hang them. God bless the hearers. An' hersel' said that some rumour must have come from Sarah Shaughnessy, for no one else had the mind bad enough for it, an' that Sarah put it out because the set of eggs hersel' gave her were all blind—an' that if it went to that the divil a

bit blind they were in the world, for 'twas only Sarah Shaughnessy, who was as deaf as a beetle, could be expecting chickens to come out after thunder and lightning goin' between the hen an' her hatchin'.

"But, sure enough, it was that Father Denis, the Parish Priest, come up to see the hole, an' them that were there around it lookin' at it said for certain he'd be prachin' two sermons upon it in the chapel next Sunday, an' they didn't know what was goin' to become of the Kellehers at all.

"In a couple of days after that when I went into me dinner, after me hard day's work puttin' the pyaties in a pit, if hersel' hadn't two blue summonses an' seven women readin' them with her, an' she cryin' an' they givin' her all the comfort they could. Red Bill Cassidy, the summons-server, was only an hour left the house after handin' her the pair of summonses, one for hersel' and one for me, an' sure enough Tom Donohoe was on for takin' the law of us. The one for meself was for trespass an' damage upon his land, an' the one for hersel' was for trespass, assault, an' battery, and 'twas that that broke the heart of her entirely. One of the women said she saw Tom Donohoe drivin' into town the day before an' when she saw him she said to herself, 'Well, for certain Tom Donohoe is goin' to town to take the law of the Kellehers over the hole, for 'tis black the look is on the face of him.'

"An' all that day an' night the sorra good I could get from herself, for she'd do nothin' only cryin' an' moanin' an' lookin' at the two summonses spread out on the table, an' every five minutes they'd be some of the neighbours comin' in to read them an' to talk about the law. An' every time they'd read out 'assault an' battery' hersel' would make a groan an' start off cryin' agin.

"Well, next mornin' we were up with the lark, an' the

sorra much sleep either one or the other of us got that night, an' when hersel' was dressed she was a different soort of woman altogether. Not a tear had she out of her, but all for fight. 'I'll have the law of the Donohoes,' she'd say, 'an' I'll show the sleeveen up to Killmeen an' the world with his assault an' battery. That land,' she says, 'belongs to the Grand Jury, an' he has no more call to be summonsin' us for trespass than the crow flyin' over it. I'll let him see what call he has to be claimin' other people's land, an', as for his assault an' battery, I wouldn't dirty me hands be strikin' the like of him.'

"An' sure enough, in with her, dressed up in her best, to the town to see one of the lawyers, an' when she came back she was fuller of the law an' fight than ever. She started scourin' the countryside around for the ouldest people in the parish to prove about the land, an' to bring them in the coort as witnesses upon their oaths. An' the Donohoe's got a summons back from us be the hand of Red Bill, an' then the Donohoe's went round, too, lookin' for ould witnesses. Hersel' had the man up to a hundred every day, one Thade Casey, to go in an' swear he never knew the strip of land or the bush to belong to the Donohoe's' and hersel' said if she got the upper hand of the Donohoe's she'd dig a hole that'd go down to the bottom of Ireland with her own two hands, to let them see what she could do, an' no lawyer could get over the word of Thade Casey, that knew the place ever before the ould bush began to grow in it.

"Well, there was never such commotion an' botheration in Killmeen over a law case before, or such talk over anything as the diggin' of the hole, an' when we were sittin' down to our dinner two days after gettin' the summonses agin the Donohoe's in comes Sean Darmody,

with the eyes standin' in his head, an' he not having a puff of breath to say that there was a great big tall man with a white coat below at the oul' hole an' he drawin' pictures an' maps an' all soorts of geography of it an' half the parish about him. Moreover, it was on big papers the length of your arm he was makin' the map on, an' he had a tape an' he takin' measurements this way, that way, an' puttin' it all down on the papers. Tom Donohoe was tellin' him all about it, an' Pat Mullins saw the drawin' that was made, an' said the Kellehers were done for because the geography would bate them altogether. An' Sean took off with himsel' as soon as he said all this to see the rest of the map-makin' down at the hole.

"When he went out, says I, 'Mary Ellen,' says I, 'we're bate over the maps entirely.'

"'Not at all, Tom,' says she, an' her eyes blazin'. We'll get Ned Murphy from Coolafin to make as fine maps of it as ever anyone could be wishful to see. He's the man,' says she, 'that makes all the maps for the tenants goin' into the Land Coort, to be havin' a fair rint fixed, an' when we went in for our second term in me father's place at home, Ned Murphy made out the finest drawin' of our improvements, an' our drains, an' our values that was ever heard in coort. Ten poun's he had taken off the rint, no less, be rayson of his maps an' the way he talked an' palavered the Commissioners when they come to walk the land. 'Twas a cowl'd, wet day, an' he brought them straight into the bottom, where they were sinkin' to their ankles, an' when they got out of it they drove off famished, an' took Ned's word for the rest of it. There's no finer man for maps in Ireland that Ned Murphy, so there isn't.'

"There didn't three more bites pass the lips of her until she was up and out to tackle the jennet an' away with

her drivin' up to Ned Murphy's, o' Coolafin. Two half-crowns she put into the hand of him, an' peace nor aise she wouldn't have until he drove back with her to the hole that was dug at the fairy bush. The tall man with the white coat was only after drivin' away from it, with the maps made an' all, when up comes hersel' an' Ned Murphy an' the jennett gallopin'. A gossun that saw them comin, took runnin' down the road, an' he callin' out, 'Be the powers, here's the Kelleher's jennett, an' hersel' in the car with Ned Murphy, the valuer.'

"An' sure there was the best part of the parish in the road near the hole, an' when Ned Murphy took out his papers an' begun to make his maps an' plans, an' hersel' an' she directin' him, Pat Mullins gave out the word that maybe the Donohoe's wouldn't have the upper-hand of it after all, for Ned Murphy was a man that knew his business, if he had the County Surveyor's man agin him itself.

"Well, what with one thing an' another, the day for the case within in the coort house come round, an' mesel' an' hersel' were early on the road drivin' in, but, if we were itself, so were all the people o' Killmeen, an' the witnesses into the bargain.

"We went into the coort, an' sat down, out near the bench, an' the peelers made room for oul' Thade Casey on his crutches, an' for Nancy Whelan that was near gone blind with age. Tom Donohoe was there, to be sure, with his woman an' all the friends from both sides, an' they sittin' opposite to oursel's. The lawyer that the Donohoe's had was a tall, lanky man that you couldn't know whether was young or ould, an' our fella was a fine, fat man, with goold-rimmed glasses that he used to whip off his nose every time he'd start up to give the law out of him. An' the county surveyor's man was there with a

rowl o' maps, but if he was, so was Ned Murphy of Coolafin, with another rowl, givin' our side of the geography. Then in comes a couple of young fellas with paper an' pencils to be takin' it all down for the papers, an' they puttin' tops on the pencils an' yawnin'. An' one fella o' them put such a fine top on his pencil that, bedad, if he wasn't timpted to give a big fat sergeant that stood forinst him a prod of it in the leg. An' the sergeant made a leap an' roared out, 'Silence in coort,' when the lawyers an' every one began to laugh at him.

" 'Twasn't very long 'til the magistrate himsel' walked in, an' every one took off his hat when he sat on the bench. An oul', cross-lookin' man he was, that looked over his spectacles at everyone, an' when he'd be askin' a question an' get a civil answer, he'd say, Oh-ah, an the divil a word more.

" Our own case was the very first called out, an' me heart began to jump at the very mention of me name in coort, it did so. An' up with Tom Donohoe into the box, an' began to tell all about the diggin' of the bush, an' the assault of him be Kelleher's wife—that's the way the mane tinker spoke of hersel', that was twice as good as the Donohoe's any day. An' that I may never sin if the lanky of a lawyer didn't say, 'I believe the hole was dug by those people for a crock of gold.' 'An', says Tom Donohoe, 'so I'm told.'

" 'Don't mind what you're told,' says our fella, jumpin' up an' glarin' at him.

" 'A crock of gold?' says the oul' magistrate.

" 'Yes, your worship,' says the lanky lawyer. 'They have Leprechauns out in Killmeen, an' these Kelleher people were diggin' for a crock of gold and destroyin' our land.'

" Everyone began to laugh at the way he said this, an' hersel', whose eyes were blazin', jumped up an' says, ' It's the Grand Jury's land, so it is.'

" ' Sit down,' says the clerk to her.

" ' Put her out if she can't conduct herself,' says the magistrate.

" ' Howld yer whist, Mary Ellen,' says I to her.

" But hersel' only stood up agin. ' Here's Ned Murphy, of Coolafin,' says she, ' to prove it be the maps.'

" ' If you don't hold your tongue,' says our lawyer, pullin' her back into the seat, ' I'll throw up the case.'

" Then up the County Surveyor's man goes an' spreads a map before the magistrate. Bedad, he hardly looked at it, an' then says ' Oh, oh.'

" ' Your worship,' says our lawyer, popping up an' whippin' off the glasses.

" ' Question of title involved,' says the magistrate, without lookin' up at him, an' he writin' in a book. Them were the very words he said, for hersel' had every word of it off be heart from beginnin' to ind, and she used to be givin' it all out of her like a song for many a day after. ' Question of title involved,' he says. ' You must go to the County Court. I've no jurisdiction. For the threatenin' language an' assault, Mary Ellen Kelleher is bound to the peace to be of good behaviour towards all her Majesty's subjects for twelve calendar months, herself in five pounds an' two sureties of two pound ten each, or, in default, fourteen days' imprisonment in Galway Jail, without hard labour.'

" The words come like pistol shots upon us. I was struck spacheless mesel', for I thought 'twas goin' to jail hersel' was. She thought the same, an' up she jumped

agin. 'Musha,' says she, 'Musha, glory be to God, why didn't you hang me dacently without judge or jury? The like of such law was ne'r heard tell of before, an' we not allowed to open our mouths.'

"Remove that woman," says the Magistrate.

"Go an' get your sureties, like a good woman," says the Clerk.

"And don't go diggin' for any more gold," says the lanky lawyer, with a dry grin on him.

"Maybe," says hersel' back to him, "'tis often yer oul' father had the spade in his fist. Ye look," says she, "as if ye came from a spalpeen." An' sure enough the shot went home, for the lanky lawyer sat down without a word, while our big fat lawyer whipped the glasses off him, leaned back in the bench, stuck out his fat legs from him, an' roared with laughter up at the ceilin'. 'Mrs. Kelleher,' says he, 'is well able to fight her corner, whether she's in Killmeen or abroad.'

"Put her out," says his worship, an' 'I was in dread Mary Ellen would knock a round out of him, too, an' be flung into jail for ever. But the neighbours gathered around about her, and brought us out of coort, an' they tellin' us what we'd have to do, an' sayin' that the law was the quarest thing out, an' that 'twas easily known the maps the tall man made would bate anyone.

"An' God knows we were thankful to be out of it, when we heard that there was no such thing as jailin' or payin' the money, only gettin' people to be signin' papers. So, after an hour or two we done our business at the market, an' drove home in the heel of the evenin'.

"An' when we got home I was puttin' the jennett in the stable when who comes up to me but Antony Meara. 'Tom,' says he, 'there's quare news in Killmeen.'

"What is it, Antony?" says I.

"A good dale of the people," says he, "say that 'tis how you had a Leprechaun an' were diggin' for the goold when Tom Donohoe interfared with ye."

"People," says I, "do be sayin' more than their prayers."

"Morebetoken," says he, "there is a Leprechaun in the parish."

"Where is he?" says I.

"He's above in Larry Dolan's of the cross," says he.

"Larry Dolan's?" says I.

"The same," says he, "An' the devil a foot can he get him to stir out with his tricks an' deludherments. The day of Martin Moran's funeral he caught him. He was in behind the ditch an' Larry, being the last man at the funeral, went in to light his pipe, an' there did he see the Leprechaun an' he havin' a hould of his two sides an' he laughin' like as if he was on for bustin', an' he lookin' after the funeral. Larry stole up upon him an' grabbed him up, ran home with him, locked him into the house with his niece, an' overtook the funeral before 'twas at the graveyard. An' there he is in the house to this day, an' they can get no good of him, no matter what they conthrive. They had to be tellin' him all about the diggin' of the hole at the fairy bush, an' the law over it, an' every time he'd hear tell of the law, an' all the botheration there was over the hole, he'd be taken with the laughin' worse than ever, he would so, in throth."

"Well, when I heard this I felt a maygrim in me head, an' I staggered on me feet as I made for the house."

"May God be givin' me strength to bear all me troubles," says I, "but be this an' be that, the Leprechaun is drivin' me to death's door."

V. The Poplar to the Rescue.

WE were all comfortably seated under a haycock in the meadow the following evening, and had our tired limbs stretched out on the grass with the beautiful sensation of restfulness and exquisite indolence known only to the hard toiler. Oul' Tom Kelleher was filling his pipe. He crunched the t'baccy between the brown palms of his hands with an unction and air of satisfaction which boded well for the promised story. The light of day was slowly blending into the soft purple of a mystic twilight. The air was pregnant with the perfume of the new-mown hay, and joyous with the vibrating melody of many larks on the wing.

"'Tom,' said young Seumas Darmody in the tone of voice of one volunteering useful information. 'Tom, you left off last night where you got the maygrim in your head as you made for the house.'

"Oul' Tom Kelleher went on silently crunching his t'baccy with the air of the seer who can afford to ignore well-meaning but unnecessary suggestions.

In another instant a bare-foot daughter of Kate O'Meara's came running up the meadow, and we could all see that the stubbles of the mowed grass were giving her

all she could do to bear. But she came bravely along, with many squirms and contortions on her flushed face, that reflected the prickings of the stubbles on the soles of her unprotected feet.

"Och!" says she, when she came near us, 'there's murders below—near the stream at the bridge crossin' the road. Ned Keighrey was in the stream lookin' for eels to fork, an' what does he do an' he makin' a dhrive at one of them but put the fork through one of his toes. He's sittin' up in the bank an' he bawlin' an' roarin', an' he not havin' the heart to pull the fork out.'

Immediately there was a stampede from the meadow down to the stream, and the rest of the evening was spent extracting the fork from Ned Keighrey's toe in the way likely to be least painful to the sufferer.

"Musha, Ned," complained one of the men who was there, 'where were yer eyes to go an' do the like to yerself?'

"Oh, then," said Ned, between moans, 'the divil sweep him for an eel. He wasn't right, so he wasn't. He was dodgin' me from one place to another the len'th of the evenin', an' sure several times I thought I had him, but the sorra bit of him had I at all. One time,' said Ned, after a pause and a few moans, 'one time I was sure an' certain I had him in the back, but what does he do but turn up his white belly in the water an' away with him under another stone. He wasn't right.'

"That's the truth for you," said Kate O'Meara's little girl, who was the only witness of the scene, and who felt she should corroborate Ned's story. 'Sure,' she says, 'wasn't I lookin' at the misfortunate eel when he come out from undher a stone, an' where does he make for but undher Ned's foot an' Ned made on dhrive of the fork at

him an', bedad, with that the blood comes up in the stream, an' out comes Ned limpin' to the bank, an' he carryin' the fork in his toe.'

The dramatic incident in the stream—which was discussed that night in every homestead in Killmeen—postponed Tom Kelleher's story for one night longer, and luckily, Tom graciously admitted that the disastrous occurrence to Ned Keighrey justified the audience at the haycock in so unceremoniously abandoning him. Besides, Tom considered that due reparation was made to his offended dignity when the injured Ned Keighrey came limping down to the meadow, with his wounded foot swathed in numerous bandages, to hear the story next evening. Ned was treated with all the marked consideration and sympathy which are always extended to invalids in Killmeen.

"Ned, a mhic," said one of the boys to him, 'sit down here an' rest yoursel', ye misfortunate crathur. Sure if ye had the thought to be comin' down here last night an' to be listenin' to Tom givin' out the story it isn't stickin' a fork ye'd be in yer toe in mistake for a deludherin' eel.' A remark which had the advantage of expressing sympathy with Ned, and paying an indirect compliment to oul' Tom Kelleher.

"Well, well," said oul' Tom Kelleher, the day after the trial in coort over the diggin' of the hole at the oul' ancient fairy bush, 'I was as moidhered a man in me head as ever stood in Ireland, Asia, or Africa. But if I was hersel' wasn't. She was up the same as ever an' all work an' business. All she'd say was, 'Them Donohoes will be ruein' the day yet that they ever crossed me path, as great people as they're conceitin' theirselves. They'll be no standin' them,' says she, 'after this.'

I held me whist about what Antony Meara came up to tell me about the Leprechaun being up in Larry Dolan's place, for, to tell the truth, I didn't know what to do. I said to mesel' that if I went up an' laid me eyes on the Leprechaun there's no sayin' what would happen to a man that'd murdher a fairy. As like as not the house would be burned over our heads or a storm blow us into the say, for the anger of the fairies would be about me no matter where I went. So says I to mesel', 'In the name o' God,' says I, 'I'll not be goin' next or near him, for he has put trouble an' misfortune in me path enough.'

All the same, as ye can be understandin', the crock o' goold would be comin' into me head at odd whiles, an' all I could do with it if I could ever get the upperhand of the Leprechaun. Still an' with all I kep' to me work steady all day around the place, an' any of the neighbours I had a word with said nothin' about Larry Dolan, so the news wasn't much spread.

That night, when we were sittin' down be the fire, goin' over our troubles, who came in but Mrs. Dempsey. She sat down with us, and of coorse had a few words to say about the law. 'The law,' says Mrs. Dempsey, 'is like a crooked borheen—you never know where it'll be landin' you. Sure, the Lord save us,' she says, 'there was a dacent man hung up beyond at See Finn for a deed he no more had hand, act, or part in than what you or me or Tom there had, Mrs. Kelleher. He was so. An' to make the matter worse they dhrove him out into the counthry from the jail an' he sittin' up on his own coffin in a car, an' the hangman standin' on it with him.

"Thim'd be in the bad times," says hersel'.

"They would, I'll engage," says Mrs. Dempsey. 'But,' she says, 'they made a grand song up about him

that the boys used to be singin' on the quiet, for its jail they'd get if there was a note heard out of them.'

"Arrah, don't be talkin', woman alive,' says hersel', but didn't I see a young lump of a fella brought off to the barrack one day for singin' The Peeler an' the Goat. An' low an' behold, when the word went round the market the sorra man, woman, or child in the place but was singin' a stave of it before half the day was over. 'Thim,' says she, 'that was never known to give a note out of them in their lives len'th up with it, an' thim that hadn't as much as a note no more than an oul' crow that'd be hoastin' on the tree made the best offer they could to be whistlin' it. Sure, she says, 'the Peelers couldn't be conthrin' to put a stop to the like of that except they brought all the people in the country to the barracks, and it's a quare oul' job they'd have to do the like of that.'

"It is, in throath,' said Mrs. Dempsey, 'but the peelers have to do their work, an' I'm not one for puttin' blame on them. It's the crookedness of the law I'm agin entirely.'

Then, after giving us this comfort about the law, Mrs. Dempsey pulled down closer to the fire an' looked into it for a start. 'I come in to know,' she says at last, 'if ye minded what the Donohoe's lawyer said in the coort about the Leprechaun being out in Killmeen?'

'Hersel' stiffened up when she heard this, an' smothered down her praiskin on her knees. She gave me a look as much as to say, 'Tom Kelleher, don't you be tellin' this woman anything, for its news and knowledge she's after with all her soft talk.' So I held my tongue.

"Aye,' says hersel', kind of tart, 'Aye, so we did, now, ma'am.'

"Hethen," says Mrs. Dempsey, 'so did many another an' 'twas a quare word.'

"Sure enough it was," says hersel', 'but who'd be mindin' an oul' lantern jaw of a lawyer like him, or what he says. Glory,' she says, 'Glory, but you couldn't get a peck on one of his bones no more than if they were buried for a year an' a day. 'Tis a wondher to me,' she says, 'that the likes of an oul' bag of bones like him would be put up with in any coorthouse in the world.'

"'Thrue enough for you, Mrs. Kelleher,' says Mrs. Dempsey, 'an' 'tis yoursel' that has cause to be scarifyin' the likes of him out an' out. But,' she says, lookin' up from the fire, 'but be all accounts the divil a word of a lie did he put on it when he said there was a Leprechaun in Killmeen.'

"'I'd never b'lieve one word that'd come out of his mouth in forty years,' says hersel'.

"'Belike not,' says Mrs. Dempsey, 'but whether or which,' she says, 'there's a Leprechaun above in Larry Dolan's of the Cross.'

"Flumixed hersel' was when the words came out of Mrs. Dempsey, an' she sat up in her chair like as if someone dhrove a poker up her spine. Bad enough I felt over it mesel', too, for, says I to mesel': 'musha,' I says, 'isn't it badly you wanted to be comin' down with your news, ye oul' hag, an' to be puttin' more notions into us for fear we hadn't our hearts broken enough be that limb o' the divil of a fairy.'

"'Aye,' says Mrs. Dempsey, 'It's above in Larry Dolan's the Leprechaun is, for Delia Mahony had it for gospel from Mary Noonan, Larry's aunt, an' Kate Mahony's eldest girl brought it down to Kate Mulvanny,

an' the Connor's boy brought it to mesel' an' he passin' with the cows this evenin'.'

" 'Larry Dolan's itself,' says hersel', in a kind of drame.

" 'Larry Dolan's,' says Mrs. Dempsey. 'An', she says, there'll be no ind to the money that the Dolan's 'll be gettin' out of the Leprechaun.'

" 'Likely not,' says hersel'.

" An, bedad, Mrs. Dempsey got up then and said she'd have to be goin', for she only took a chase down to see how we were, an' to be givin' us the news.

" 'It's the strange news, sure enough,' says hersel'.

" 'So it is, for certain,' says Mrs. Dempsey. 'An', I suppose now,' she says, 'that the Dolan's 'll be makin' a shift from Killmeen, for they'll be that cocked up with the Leprechaun's money that Killmeen will never be able to hould them.'

" When Mrs. Dempsey went off for hersel' we sat down be the fire agin. Hersel was well in a drame lookin' into the burnin' sods. So I held me tongue for a good bit.

" At long an' at last, hersel' looked up at me.

" 'Tom,' says she, 'was there ever such a scald put into the world since the first day 'twas made as that Leprechaun?'

" 'Never, Mary Ellen, never,' says I, 'nor a hundred worlds, if it went to that.'

" 'Larry Dolan,' says she, 'or one belongin' to him has no call to that Leprechaun.'

" 'Ah, Mary Ellen, woman, dear, sure no one no more than another has call to the Leprechaun,' says I, an' I dhreadin' that hersel' was makin' up another plan in her head.

" 'That's just it now,' she says, rousin' up. 'No one

has more call to him than another, an' you've as much call to him as Larry Dolan.'

" 'But, woman mine,' says I, 'Larry has him—an' that's the differ.'

" 'Aye,' says hersel', 'but you had him undher your roof as well as Larry. Why wouldn't you be just takin' a stroll up to Larry's now, to see what way are they, an' how do you know, now, but you'd be just in time for your crock o' goold that's well earned be what you went through with him.'

" 'Och,' says I, 'sure Larry isn't that foolish that he'd be lettin' me take the Leprechaun.'

" 'Sure,' says she, an' she gettin' flushed in the face, 'What need Larry mind? Couldn't he be gettin' his crock, too?'

" 'Yoursel' is the very woman, Mary Ellen Kelleher,' says I, 'that towld me you had it from your own grandmother that there's never any luck with a Leprechaun when there's two people in it.'

" 'Faith, I tell ye, what, this was more than hersel' could get over, so it was. But, sure, what was the good of it, because when you get the upper hand of a woman in that way it only makes her worse. Hersel' just lent over the fire an' began to bemoan the quare man she had that wouldn't put one foot beyond another to get a crock o' goold an' so much rint due that before we knew where we were we'd be out on the waves o' the world. 'Sure,' she says into the fire, 'Sure the heart within me is broke entirely with the dinth of throuble an' thribulation. Every turn,' she says, 'he's as conthrairy as an oul' sow that'd be goin' into every borheen along the road. When he's towld everything that's for his good, nothin' will he do but arguifyin' with a poor woman like mesel'. An'

here we are,' she says, 'an we waitin' for the bailiff an' the emergency man to be in on the top of us an' that con-thrairy man sittin' down be the fire arguifyin' an' he payin' as little heed to the shower o' goold that's within a hen's race of him as the sparke goin' up the chimley.'

" 'Whist now, woman,' says I to her, and up I got. 'I'll go up to Larry Dolan's,' says I, 'an' I'll do me endeavours to get a houl't of the Leprechaun, but before heaven an' earth its more like crackin' his oul' neck I feel than anything else.'

So up I took to Larry Dolan's, an' went in with me. 'God save all here,' says I. To me great surprise the house was half full of the neighbours. I thought at first there was a spree or a party in it, but Larry said that there wasn't at all, that the neighbours only happened to drop in like mesel' to see what way he was. Mrs. Larry was there, too, and Larry's niece, Mary Noonan. And, before very long, more of the people of the parish began to come in until the house wasn't able to hold any more. Larry Dolan and the wife never before had so many people dyin' to know what way he was gettin' the health, an' he answered them all civil enough. No one that came bobbed a word about the Leprechaun at all, but sure you could tell be the eyes they were throwin' about an' the way they looked at each other, an' the way they started at every stir, that 'twas the Leprechaun the people said Larry had in the house that brought them. Like a hunger, the thoughts of the goold was on every one of them, an' you could see it in their eyes. When the house got filled with the people they began to gether round about outside, an' as no one would talk, or sing, or dance, or tell a story it was more like a wake than anything else. Be degrees everyone's eyes began to stray to the little room door off the

kitchen, for if the Leprechaun was anywhere he was bound to be in there. This door used, as a rule, be open, an' to-night it was closed an' the bolt drawn across it. Morebetoken, Larry Dolan, the wife, an' the niece seemed to be greatly in dread that someone or another would make an offer to go into the room, an' sure it was small blame to them not to want to give out the Leprechaun if they had him.

"I was thinkin' to mesel' that if the Leprechaun had to come out while all the people o' Kilmeen were in and about Larry Dolan's house, an' that if he had to give a crock o' goold to every mother's son of them, that the sorra taste at all would he be left himsel', and that 'twould take until the crack o' doom to gether the height o' Croagh Patrick of goold agin. An' I was thinkin', as well as that, that if the Leprechaun was not in Larry Dolan's at all that it's the fine laugh he an' the wife an' the niece would have at us all over it.

"Well, it was comin' on to eleven o'clock when who walked in but hersel' into the full house with her 'God save all here.'

"'You're welcome; in troth, Mrs. Kelleher,' says Mrs. Dolan to her. 'I was expectin' you'd be down a long bit ago, and was wondherin' what in the world was keepin' you.'

"When Mrs. Dolan was sayin' this 'twas easily knowin' that she was havin' a quiet bit of a rap at hersel', for the Dolan's were distant relations of the Donohoe's, an' took the side of the Donohoe's in the law.

"'Oh,' says hersel', as cool as you like, 'I was wondherin' what was keepin' me Tom,' she says, turnin' round to me, 'it's all hours of the night, an' time for us to be on our way home.'

“ ‘The night is young enough yet,’ said Ned Donohoe, lookin’ around at all the neighbours. All the neighbours were very quiet an’ reserved in themselves, but the hunger for the goold was in every one of their eyes.

“ ‘Aye,’ says Kate Mulvanny, taking down a stockin’ an’ beginnin’ to knit it, ‘the night is young, an’ ’twould be a pity to see the people scatherin’ when they’er all enjoyin’ themselves so well. There’s great heart in the country all the time,’ says Kate, without lookin’ up. It took Kate to give out a dry one like that. The neighbours began to shift in their seats—all of them that had seats, an’ all of them that hadn’t seats to shift on their feet—when Kate began to throw out hints of this kind.

“ ‘Had ye e’er a step of a dance at all, or a stave of a song?’ asked hersel’, nice an’ innocent.

“ ‘We hadn’t, Mrs. Kelleher, the sorra recaive the one,’ says Kate, ‘but I wouldn’t wonder,’ she says, ‘if it was waitin’ for yoursel’ to come down they were before they started.’

“ ‘Yes,’ says Larry Dolan, lightin’ his pipe with a coal from the fire, ‘yes,’ he says, ‘let someone give us a song.’

“ ‘The neighbours began to compare with each other, an’ it was a long while before any of them could be got to rise a verse.

“ ‘Sure enough,’ says Kate Mulvanny, ‘I often heard the oul’ people sayin’ that there was no place within the four corners of Ireland to bate Killmeen at the fun an’ jollification. The people o’ Killmeen,’ she says, beamin’ around on the glum-lookin’ neighbours, ‘have hearts as light in their bodies as the white blossom of the ceannabhain you’d see carried along on a summer breeze.’

“ ‘Aye, have they’ says hersel’, ‘an’ the Lord be keepin’ them ever so.’ Hersel’ was the only one in Kill-

meen that ever made any kind of an offer to stand up to Kate Mulvanny an' sometimes it was one an' sometimes it was the other that got the upper hand of it.

" ' You'd never feel the night passin' in Killmeen when the people are gathered together in a neighbour's house,' says Kate Mulvanny, coverin' a yawn with her hand over her mouth. ' They're nearly as gay as what they are beyond in Killbrack,' says Terry Dempsey, for it was from Killbrack Kate Mulvanny's people come.'

" With that hersel' put her back up agin the dresser an' up with a song. An' sure hersel' can be singin' like a lark when she has a mind to it. It was a fine song in Irish she sang, for she could never sing in the Beurla. Over thirty verses that song had, an' it was made by a poet named Callanan that lived one time over near Craughwell. Callanan's wife was beetling clothes one day in the river an' she lost the beetle, for it was carried away by the current. Then she told her man about it ; he up and he made a song about the lost beetle an' told the history of every townland the beetle passed by until it went into the wide sea. This was the song that hersel' sang now, an' as much as a line or a verse she didn't leave out. When it was sung the people clapped their hands an' an old man crossed the floor an' shook hands with hersel', an' said it raised the cockles of his heart an' made him feel young agin to hear such a fine song.

" ' Upon my word, but it's the grand song,' says Kate Mulvanny. ' 'Twould be a great song,' says she, ' for a body that'd want to do a dale of thinkin'. It gives you plenty of time anyhow. I declare to goodness,' says she, ' if a person was singing it in your house you could go out an' milk the cows an' be in for plenty of it when you'd get back.'

“ ‘ The man that made that song’, says hersel’, ‘ made it to be sung be people with good, sound lungs an’ with no asthma in their pipes. For ye see Kate Mulvanny used to complain of the asthma odd whiles in the winter. There was dead silence in the house when hersel’ gave out this hint to Kate, an’ in the height of the silence if we weren’t all alarmed to hear something kickin’ the room door on the inside, an’ callin’ out in a pipin’ thin voice, ‘ open the door, until I be shakin’ hands with Mrs. Tom Kelleher for the fine song she gave out of her.’ ”

“ The minute I heard the first word I knew the voice. ’Twas the Leprechaun’s voice—the voice of the Leprechaun that gave me all the tormentin’, the Leprechaun that filled me heart with drames of all I’d be doin’ when I’d have the crock o’ goold, the Leprechaun that made the heart heavy within me with all the divilment an’ disappointment and trouble he put upon me and upon hersel’. But the thoughts of havin’ him once more within me grasp washed all the trouble from me, like you’d see one flash from the sun wipin’ away the mists from a hill. I looked round at all the neighbours. With the singin’ of hersel’ an’ the sparrin’ match with Kate Mulvanny they had kind of lost the hunger for goold that was upon them all the night, but the minute they heard the kicking at the door, an’ the quare pipin’ voice the goold hunger blazed in their eyes worse than ever. Some of them turned as white as the windin’ sheet, an’ others of them began to shake in every inch. Larry Dolan an’ the wife an’ Kate Mulvanny were as mad as hatters.

“ ‘ Who in the name of goodness is it that’s in the room ? ’ says hersel’.

“ ‘ A friend of ours, ma’am,’ says Kate Mulvanny. ‘ Don’t pay any heed to him,’ she says. ‘ Give us a step

of a dance before ye go, Pat O'Meara,' she says. 'It's time for people to be in their beds.'

" 'But, Kate,' says hersel', 'it must be a friend of mine, too, for he called me by me name.'

" 'Oh,' says Kate, 'that's only a mistake.'

" 'It's a quare mistake,' says hersel', 'an' I'd like to be shakin' hands with anyone that wants to give me the hand. I was never any way proud or stand-offish to rich or poor, gentle or simple, big or small.'

" 'This is no hour of the night for anything of the kind,' says Kate.

" 'I must see who it is that wants to shake hands with me,' says hersel'.

" 'Mind what you're about, now,' says Kate Mulvanny. 'You were at work in the dead hour of the night before,' she says, 'that brought you into the law an' that went within a prod of a wattle of landin' yoursel' an' your misfortunate man in Galway Jail.'

" 'I don't know what would be the upshot of this remark at all only just at that very minute Tom Dempsey, who was near the room door, made a sudden leap at it, shot back the bolt, threw the door open, and made a mad drive at something in the dark.'

" 'Blast your impudence, Dempsey,' I heard the Leprechaun calling out, and, with that, I saw Tom Dempsey goin' in flounderin' about the room, while the Leprechaun came out into the kitchen between his legs with a leap. Before anyone could say or do anything, hersel' was down on her knees on the floor shakin' hands with the Leprechaun.

" 'Dyin' I was the len'th of the day to get one sight of you, Mrs. Kelleher, ma'am,' says the Leprechaun.

“ ‘ It’s a cure for sore eyes to see you,’ says hersel’, an’ not satisfied with wringing the two hands of the Leprechaun, she took him in her two arms an’ pressed him to her breast.

“ ‘ Och ! ’ says the Leprechaun, puttin’ his arms about her neck ; ‘ och,’ he says, ‘ isn’t it mesel’ that’s havin’ the fine do of it. But, Lord, Mary Ellen, there’s Tom lookin’ at us. We’re caught ! ’ he says, lookin’ up straight at mesel’ over the shoulder of hersel’.

“ ‘ You imp of the divil, how daar you ’ ! cried hersel’, putting him back the length of her arms from her, but holdin’ him purty tight all the same.

“ ‘ Sure, I told you,’ says the Leprechaun, ‘ that ‘Tom’d find us out some fine day or other. We’ll have to be givin’ up our little bit of sparkin’, now,’ he says.

“ ‘ I was too dumbfounded to say or do anything, an’ all the people were likewise, so surprised that they never thought of movin’ hand or foot. The brass and brazenness of that Leprechaun left me lookin’ at him like a dummy.

“ ‘ May the divil sweep you an’ your lyin’ oul’ tongue,’ says hersel’, gettin’ into a temper, an’ I saw be her that she was in a terrible rage. She got up on her feet holdin’ the Leprechaun, an’ I knew by her that she had a thought of flingin’ him from her. But by this time Larry Dolan had recovered his senses.

“ ‘ Mrs. Kelleher,’ he called out, ‘ hand over that Leprechaun. He’s mine.’

“ ‘ Hand over the Leprechaun, you whipster,’ cried Kate Mulvanny.

“ ‘ Give out our Leprechaun,’ cried Mrs. Dolan.

“ ‘ The three calls of them worked like magic on all the people. With one mind they all made a rush towards

the Leprechaun an' upon hersel'. In the commotion I saw hersel' makin' for the door with the Leprechaun.

" ' Murders ! ' shouted the Leprechaun, ' all Killmeen is upon the top of me. I'm done above all ever crossed me. '

" ' When hersel' got as far as the door with the Leprechaun she come to a full stop. The people that had been outside an' that couldn't get into the house had got wind of the word that the Leprechaun was found, an' came rushin' up to the door, jammin' it up like herrin's in a barrel. I saw arms wavin' around hersel' an' the Leprechaun, an' tryin' to reach out for him. The hands an' arms were wavin' an' strugglin' within the house an' without the house, an' men's hoarse voices an' women's shriekin' voices were callin' out like they must have been around the Tower of Babel. The goold hunger had broken out rightly into madness. Even the little children that were on the verge of the crowd began to shriek. But in the height of it all hersel' held the Leprechaun above all the wavin' arms an' reachin' hands. Be one contrivance an' another she held him safe an' sound.

" ' The wolves of Killmeen are upon me, ' cried the Leprechaun, lookin' at the mad crowd about him, an' considerin' the danger he was in he was mighty cool. The oul' eyes were shinin' in his head, an' I'd swear he was enjoyin' the whole ructions. He was the divil of an imp above all ever that was seen or heard of.

" ' Ye lot of Mohawks ! ' he called out to the people outside, ' what are ye ravin' about ? Sure, I have lashin's of goold for ye all if I'd only be gettin' the chance of bringin' ye to where it's buried in the fort in Bill Meara's meada. Move on to the meada, Boys, Killmeen for ever, and the sky over it ! ' he'd cry.

" Well, if ye ever noticed in a crowd of people, there's

waves always passin' over it like ye'd see the waves comin' in and sweepin' out from the sea. All of a sudden such a wave swept over the crowd o' people, an' hersel' an' the Leprechaun were pushed in a great bit about the house like a cork on the water. When they were, all the people close to the Leprechaun made a grab at him, but he leapt clane an' dacent out of the hands of hersel' an' escaped them all. By the time he landed back agin in the arms of hersel', the wave was surgin' back, and most of us were swept out of the house, an' the Leprechaun an' Mary Ellen before us. As we were sweepin' out in this way the Leprechaun, standin' as high as he could, shouted out, 'Now, boys, for the fort an' for the goold!' It's easy enough to get a sudden notion into the head of a crowd, an' when a crowd does take a notion it acts upon it just as quick. When the people at the end of the crowd outside saw the Leprechaun come sweepin' out the door, an' he cryin', 'Now, boys, for the fort an' the goold,' they thought 'twas the people that were wantin' to be makin' for the fort, an' the minute one man made for the gate all the rest followed him, an' in next to no time the crowd was movin' across the yard, those strugglin' out of the house pushin' them on. Hersel' stuck to the Leprechaun through thick an' thin, an' she was just at the gate when, lo and behold, if the Leprechaun didn't reach out for a branch of a poplar tree that grew there, swung himself like a monkey on to it, an' was half-way up the tree before you could cry Jack Robinson.

" 'Och! Mary Ellen,' I called out, 'what happened you to let him out so soft?'

" 'We could see the Leprechaun settlin' himsel' nice an' comfortable on a broad bough of the poplar, for the moon, as luck would have it, was full.

“ ‘ Thanks, Mary Ellen,’ said the Leprechaun, lookin’ down. ‘ You were the jewel of an oul’ sweetheart to houl’ me up to the branch. Sure I knew you’d do it, a stoirin mo croidhe.’

“ ‘ Bad luck may tend you anyway,’ says hersel’ up to him. ‘ But if I was to stay here until St. Michael blew his trumpet I’ll not take an eye off you, you imp of the devil.’

“ An’ oul’ Tom Kelleher said ’twas time for every dacent gossoon in Killmeen to be out of the meada an’ makin’ for his home. So we all pulled ourselves out from the new-mown hay, Tom promising the while that, with the help of God, he’d be tellin’ us how the Leprechaun an’ the people fared on the followin’ evenin’.”

VI. The Crutch and the Bull.

“ As the t’baccy was still very flush with oul’ Tom Kelleher he was next to no length the following evening getting into his story, as we all lay down in the meadow after the day’s work. The weather was holding up grandly, and if it continued for a short spell longer we would have all the hay made.

“ ‘ When the Leprechaun,’ said oul’ Tom Kelleher, ‘ got up on the poplar tree that grows at the gate leadin’ into Larry Dolan’s house ; he had a chance of takin’ stock of all the people as they stood around about him in the yard an’ came troopin’ out of the house.

“ ‘ Glory be to God ! said the Leprechaun, ‘ where did they all come from ? ’

“ ‘ Killmeen,’ said a man in the crowd.

“ ‘ The goold faver is ragin’ rightly in Killmeen,’ said the Leprechaun. ‘ I’m greatly afraid,’ he says, ‘ that when ye have all yer crocks yer heads will be turned entirely with the dint of riches.’

“ ‘ They won’t, in troth,’ called back the same man, ‘ for we want all the crocks we can get.’

“ ‘ I hope, anyhow,’ says the Leprechaun, ‘ that it isn’t to turn round an’ go spendin’ all yer riches ye’ll do on the law.’ An’, as he said the words he looked down at hersel’ an’ at Tom Donohoe.

" With that I scrambled up on the wall near the gate from the crowd, an', standin' up on it, faced the people.

" 'Three cheers for Tom Kelleher,' shouted out the Leprechaun up in the tree, an' he took off his mushroom hat an' waved it. 'He's one of the finest speech-makers,' says he, 'that ever stood on a platform, or a wall, at a meetin'.'

" 'Look here, neighbours,' says I, to the people, 'this is the biggest divil of a Leprechaun that ever came on the face of the earth, an' it's only killin' time he is until he gets the people's eyes off him, so whatever ye do keep the eyes on him.'

" 'Right you are, Tom,' says the Leprechaun. 'But, neighbours,' he says, 'I only came up in the tree to save my four bones from being broken. 'I want to come to an understandin' with ye about the goold.'

" 'That's fair enough,' says a woman in the crowd.

" 'If the Leprechaun,' says I, 'doesn't come down off the tree I'll ask a few of the nimblest boys in the parish to climb the poplar an' throw him from it.'

" 'Hear, hear,' the people called out, and with that, three or four boys got on the wall ready to climb into the poplar.

" The Leprechaun began to climb round the branches of the tree on every side, an' I knew by him that he was contriving to get a branch of the tree between him an' the eyes of the people, so that the spell would be broken, an' that he could disappear. But sure the people were everywhere around and he couldn't escape their eyes, contrive how he could.

" 'Go on up, boys,' says I to the gossoons, 'and fling him from the tree.'

" The boys began to scramble up.

“ ‘ Hold on, there, one minute,’ says the Leprechaun. ‘ I want to know if I come down is it to trample me to death ye’ll do ? ’ ”

“ ‘ We won’t do anythin’ of the kind,’ says I.

“ ‘ Then,’ says he, ‘ I’ll come down if one man agrees to carry me to the fort with all the other people behind him. When we come to the fort I’ll be showin’ ye where the goold is buried.’ ”

“ ‘ I’m agreed to that,’ says I. An’ all the people in the crowd said they were agreed in that.

“ ‘ Now,’ said the Leprechaun, ‘ who’s the man that’ll carry me to the fort ? ’ ”

“ ‘ There was no answer for a good bit from the people.

“ ‘ At last hersel’ up an’ said, ‘ Let Tom carry him, as he’s the best able to manage him.’ ”

“ ‘ Musha, well done to you, Mrs. Kelleher,’ says Mrs. Dempsey, ‘ isn’t yoursel’ the kind woman to yer own. Wouldn’t you like your man to carry the Leprechaun, cock you up ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Aye, cock her up,’ says a whole lot of them, an’ then the arguifyin’ began rightly. No one would agree to let the other carry the Leprechaun, and there was the Leprechaun above in the tree without a word out of him. Well pleased he, was, I’ll engage, that the people wouldn’t agree over it.

“ ‘ There’s Tom O’Meara, now,’ says a man in the height of the argument. ‘ He’s a gossoon that every man can trust to be carryin’ the Leprechaun. He would never do a wrong turn no matter what turned up.’ ”

“ ‘ He would not,’ says hersel’. ‘ But Tom O’Meara is the swiftest runner in the parish, an’ there’s no sayin’ what divilment that Leprechaun would be puttin’ into his

head. Maybe it's to take across the country the pair of them would, an' sight nor light of either one or the other be ever seen or traced agin.'

"An' all the people said hersel' was right.

"It dawned upon mesel', then, that why the people could not agree over the carryin' of the Leprechaun was because they were afraid that who ever got the carryin' of him would run away with him an' lave all the rest in the lurch. So I looked around at all the people an' on the verge of the crowd I saw oul' Thade Casey, and he leanin' on his pair of crutches. So I up an' says, 'Neighbours,' I says, 'we'll give the Leprechaun to carry to the fort to oul' Thade Casey, an' the sorra a fear of him runnin' away.'

"An' all the people said, 'the very man, the divil a foot can Thade be goin' from us,' an' I looked up at the Leprechaun and says to him, 'Come down me fine buco until Thade Casey bes carryin' you to the fort. You thought, now, that the people could never agree about it, but I'm too well up to your tricks be this.'

"'You're a smart man, Tom Kelleher, a smart man,' says the Leprechaun.

"'Come down before you're flung down,' says I.

"'Before I come down,' says he, 'let Thade Casey stand under the tree, so that none of the wolves of Killmeen will be fallin' upon me before oul' Thade has time to take up his burden.'

"So oul' Thade came in limpin' through a passage the people made for him, until he was at the trunk of the poplar, an' that self an' same minute down shot the Leprechaun on his shoulders like a star fallin' from the sky. I could see the eyes of the men an' the women blazin' in their heads when they saw the Leprechaun so near them,

an', sure enough, they looked like starvin' wolves, with the hunger for goold upon them. It's sure an' certain, I am, that they'd have fallen on the top of the Leprechaun, and maybe tear him from the mushroom hat to the bullrush shoes, only for the comical sight he made. When he shot down from the tree he landed clane an' dacent on oul' Thade's back, put his legs over Thade's shoulders, threw off his oul' caubeen, got Thade be the grey hair of the head, an', humourin' the saddle the same as you'd see a jockey on horseback, cried out, 'Clear the way out of that, will ye, for the winner of the Farmer's Plate at the Knockbarra Races!' An' the sorra bit the people could do but roar with the laughin' as oul' Thade went hobblin' out the passage they made for him, on his crutches, an' the Leprechaun on his back.

"In the excitement goin' out the gate someone gave oul' Thade a push an' he staggered. As soon as he did, the Leprechaun let on to half fall from him, holdin' him round the neck the same as you'd see a jockey with his arms on a racehorse that'd stumble. 'Well over an' safe,' he says, goin' astride of Thade as he righted himsel'.

"An' on with oul' Thade down the field to the road, an' all the people behind them. When we got to the ditch oul' Thade made an offer to hop for it an' scramble up, an' over he went out into the road, very near comin' down. 'The Piper's Gap,' says the Leprechaun, goin' on with his humours all the time. Down the road we took in the moonlight, an' a quarer sight, sure, was never seen in the parish. Some of the people shouted out to take a short-cut to the fort in Keating's gate an' across be Ned Donohoe's land. Oul' Thade didn't want to do that at first, but some of the women that were near him gave him a

push up agin' the gate. An' someone else shoved the gate open, an' in we were.

" 'Don't be all night,' says a young fellow, givin' oul' Thade a jostle.

" 'For shame, to shove the oul' man,' some of the people called out, but while ye'd be winkin' the Leprechaun had grabbed one of Thade's crutches an' gave the fella that pushed him a fine crack of it on the side of the pate, staggerin' him on his feet. 'Take that, you carrahaun,' says the Leprechaun.

" 'An' the devil's cure to him,' called out the people.

" So after that none of them asked to be shovin' oul' Thade, an' along he hobbled on his crutches, with the Leprechaun pattin' him on the arms, sayin' 'Ho, now, Sancho, ho. I'll be givin' you you're head comin' to the winnin' post. Steady, my boy, steady. That's the pace.'

" At last we come to the meada, an' I couldn't help but thinkin' as we come into it of the run I had in me drames with Martin Moran—the Lord have mercy upon him!—for the Leprechaun, an' the way I caught the Leprechaun asleep next mornin'. An' I said to mesel' that 'twas little chance the Leprechaun had of gettin' away from all the wolves of Killmeen with the goold hunger upon them. An' in a way I was sorry for the article of a fairy, for I knew that when he'd have all the people of Killmeen given a crock o' goold apiece that 'twould take him until Judgment Day to collect them agin. An' on the other hand, I said to mesel' that if he was able to contrive to get away from us all, that the fairies would have to levy a hundred crocks for every, man, woman an' child in the crowd, an' that such a pile would bring him up to the top of Croagh Patrick, an' that he'd be let back agin to Tir-na-nOg, be the Fear Mor of the Fairies, an'

likely enough, marry the Princess. I'm a soft kind of a man in many ways, an' in spite of all the troubles an' trials the Leprechaun brought upon me I was half inclined to wish that he'd find some way for givin' us all the slip. But sure, what good was all his wits an' all his bag of tricks when he had the whole parish on his heels?

"Thinkin' these thoughts I was when who pushed up to me in the crowd, an' the goold hunger blazin' in her eyes, an' a red handkerchief tied about her head, for the night was turnin' sharp an' bitter, but hersel'.

" 'Tom,' says she, 'you an' me put up with more on the head of the Leprechaun than the whole parish, an' it's only right we should be the people to get the first two crocks. Stick up for them like a sensible man.'

"An' sure what hersel' said was right. There was no use in one man being soft-hearted in the crowd over the Leprechaun when all the rest were on the verge of goin' off their heads with the goold fever. An' I had less call than any man or woman to be soft over the Leprechaun.

"We were about half way up the meada when all of a sudden the Leprechaun pulled one of the crutches out of the hand of ou.' Thade Casey, jumped from his back, an' took off up to the fort. Did ye ever see a man runnin' a pole race? He sticks his pole in the ground, gets lifted up be it, and in that way goes a great len'th in every spring. Well, that was the way the Leprechaun took up to the fort with the crutch. I knew very well that on his own little feet the Leprechaun could make no great pace, an' that scores of the boys in the parish could catch him before he'd go a couple of hundred yards, but anything like the way he went with Thade's crutch nobody ever saw. Moreover, Thade's crutches were not like any crutches

that were ever seen or made in Ireland's ground. They were a pair his youngest son sent him from the States when he heard he was bate up with the rheumatism. 'Twas said they cost a fortune, for this son of Thade's had made a mint of money. Whatever kind of wood was in the crutches they were as light as a feather, and had a spring in them that'd nearly make an oul' rheumatic man want to skip over every stone wall he'd come across. 'Twas little wonder, then, that the Leprechaun, a nimble playboy like him, could do what he liked with a crutch like that under him.

"Well, I never saw a pack of starvin' wolves howlin' after man or baste, but I'm sure enough that they never howled a ha'porth harder than did the people o' Killmeen when they saw the Leprechaun takin' to the fort on the crutch. It was done so sudden-like that at first the people stood stark still without a word out of them, lookin' after the Leprechaun. Then the howl went up an' the pack broke.

"Only I was so near oul' Thade Casey mesel', I b'lieve he'd be knocked down an' trampled upon. He gave a stagger on his feet when the Leprechaun took the crutch from him, an' I just caught him be the shoullder an' kep' him on his feet. What was me great surprise the next second to see hersel' with her red shawl about her head, the other side of Thade?

" 'Give me your crutch,' says hersel', an', before Thade could say he would or he wouldn't, she swep' it from under him an' away with her.

" 'For shame, Mary Ellen,' I called out. But I was dumbfounded entirely when I saw hersel' tryin' to run in the crowd by risin' on the crutch the same as the Leprechaun. She made a couple o' hops an' leaps, an'

was put spinnin' about, an' then laid sprawlin' on the grass.

" 'The divil's cure to you for an object,' says oul' Thade.

" 'Sit down for a while,' says I to Thade, an' sure there was nothin' for the poor crathur to do, an' he without a crutch in the world, but sit down.

" 'So I will,' says he, very resigned, an' down he sat. When I looked up agin hersel' was on her feet runnin' up at the end of the pack with the crutch in her hand, but she made no more offer to rise on it like the Leprechaun.

" 'He was a fool,' says I, 'to go an' lave Thade Casey's back, for the minute they lay hands on him he's no more.' An' then I took after the rest of them up to the fort.

"As I ran I could see that the Leprechaun was just jumpin' in one spring from the crutch across the pool before the fort. When he got on to the fort he turned round an' surveyed the pack. He waved the crutch, an' with a cry says, 'I nearly fell with weakness laughin' at hersel', tryin' to work the crutch.'

"The words were hardly out of his mouth when some of the boys were up to the pool. Some of them made an offer to jump it, an' the rest of them ran into it, not carin' a pin, an' half-swam an' half waded across, flounderin' like whales. But the Leprechaun with another shot from the crutch was out the other side an' off up the meada.

" 'Bedad,' says I to mesel', 'he's on for a run to death over it,' an' sure enough he was.

"As cool as you like, when he got out on the meada he stopped, looked back to measure how far the first of the boys were from him, spat on his wee fists, an' off with him agin. I thought from the way he was goin' that 'twas better able to make the leaps he was gettin' every minute,

but for all that the boys were hot on his track. Be the time he was at the top of the meada they had gained ground upon him. There was a string of people from one end of the field to the other, the stiff oul' men an' women, an' the small children laggin' behind, but all trottin' on the best way they could. Across the top of the meada, keepin' close by the wall, he went, an' all the time the boys were gainin' ground. As ye may see from where we are, there is a good incline down the other side of the meada, an' the incline helped the Leprechaun; for by the time he got to the bottom of it he had held his distance from the first of the boys. Up with him straight agin for the fort an' across the pool went the boys after him. It was a grand race, an' don't be talkin'.

"But, sure, most of the people weren't able to go much farther, an' they were sittin' down here and there, moanin' an' pantin' an' tryin' to keep an eye on the Leprechaun.

"I think hersel' was one of the first to see that it was only all foolishness to keep on the track of the Leprechaun, an' that the imp was only lettin' on to the boys, designedly, that they were gainin' upon him so that they'd keep on his straight trail no matter where he went. Hersel' broke out of the stragglin' track that followed him behind an' made a run over the meada to cross-cut him. He saw her on the red hot minute an' made straight for her. She waited for him with the crutch raised in her hand, but, sure, just as he let on to be going for her he gave a shot off the crutch to one side an' was off agin. All the people now began to cross-cut the Leprechaun here, there, an' everywhere all over the meada, but, 'cute enough, he continued to keep the hard-runnin' boys on his trail, while the women an' oul' men he dodged and wriggled among as

they were waitin' for him. To see the way that imp left them all baulked with the use he made of the crutch you couldn't help but to be admirin' him.

"In the end they made it harder an' harder for him to dodge, for the boys now saw the foolishness of tryin' to track him down in a straight run. They rested themselves in batches, an' took up the runnin' on their turns, an' all the women an' oul' men sat down lookin' on, for the boys said they were more in the way than anything else. After about an hour, or close on to it, of this kind of huntin', the Leprechaun was beginnin' to show signs of laggin'. We could hear him bloatin', an' he was takin' shorter an' shorter leaps from the crutch. Six of the best runners of the parish, be dodgin' this way an' that way, an' cross-cuttin' an' playin' him into each other, the same as they would a ball at a hurlin' match, in the end got him into a corner, an' when we thought all was over with him he took three desperate springs an' out with him over the wall into Kieran Donnelly's field where he keeps the bull. Well, to be sure the boys were out over the wall afther him. an' they were no sooner out than he was back agin into the meada, an' across for the fort he made once more.

"The boys knocked down the wall in their endeavours to be afther him, an' between one thing an' another they were greatly delayed. Be the time they were into the run agin the Leprechaun was no more than fifty yards from the fort. A cry an' a cheer went up from the people when they saw the Leprechaun not able to rise on the crutch, an' he just made for the fort, draggin' it after him. We all jumped to our feet an' made for the fort.

"The moon was now full in the sky, an' you could see as clear as day. When the Leprechaun got to the fort he

fell down on it on the broad of his back with the crutch lyin' one side of him.

" 'He's done at last,' says I to mesel', an' another cry went up as the people made for him. The pack was in full cry agin. Antony Shaughnessy, the captain of the hur-lers, was leadin' everybody thirty yards. Just as he made a spring across the swamp at the fort the Leprechaun got on his feet, took up the crutch, swung it over his head, an' met Antony with it in the stomach. Poor Antony rolled over on the fort wrigglin' an' groanin', an' a cry went up from the people.

" 'Well,' says I to mesel', 'he's makin' a terrible fight for it, an' if he contrives to get the upper hand of us, God knows he's deservin' of the Princess.'

" With that the Leprechaun began to wave the crutch at the people from the fort, an' we heard a loud bellow behind us. Another cry went up from the people. Kieran Donnelly's big bull was in the meada! He got out over the wall the boys had knocked down. The people began to scatter in all directions. Mothers ran for their children, screamin' with terror. Fathers called to their wives, an' brother shouted for sister. Only half a dozen or so went on for the fort. The bull knocked the goold faver out of the rest. Small wonder. A more wicked bull was never known that Kieran Donnelly's. I looked back mesel'. The bull was whiskin' his tail, snortin', an' kickin' the grass up from the ground with his hind legs. He didn't know what to make of all the people runnin' helter-skelter all over the meada. Most of them were climbin' over the ditches an' the walls already, an' callin' on the others to run for their lives. It just flashed across me mind that the devil of a Leprechaun jumped the wall into the bull's field knowin' the boys would be

after him, an' that they'd break down the wall, an' let in the bull. It was his last card when he found himsel' in a corner, an' he played it well.

"I lay down flat on the ground to see what would happen, an', anyway, I was a good bit away from the bull. He had his eyes on the five or six people that were runnin' for the fort. There was only one woman among them. The heart was put across in me when I saw her. It was hersel'. She was carryin' oul' Thade's second crutch. I knew her by the red han'kerchief on her head.

" 'Mary Ellen !' I called out, 'for the sake of God, let him be an' save your life !' She never turned her head. But two of the men who heard the cry turned back, looked at the bull, then at the Leprechaun as he stood on the fort, wavered, but in the end made for the ditch to save their lives. Three men were now left with hersel' goin' for the fort. The bull made a louder bellow than ever, put his snout down to the ground, an' went chargin' across after the people. Another cry went up from the people who had the pluck to stay sittin' on the ditches an' the walls lookin' on. One more of the three men gave up the run to the fort when he felt the bull comin' behind him. The Leprechaun made a spring from the fort an' out straight he went to meet the two men an' hersel'. The two men were first, an' he dodged the both of them. Then he made straight for hersel'. Right behind hersel' the bull was comin' an' me heart sank. So did the hearts of the two men, for they hadn't the nerve to go after the Leprechaun when he was makin' straight for hersel' an' the bull. The bull was no more than ten yards behind her, an' his head down. The Leprechaun was closin' in upon her. I felt a cold sweat breakin' all over me body, an' I clapped me hands over me eyes to shut out the sight. I couldn't

bear to look at the terrible death hersel' was about to get. Then, like a madman, I leaped to me feet, roarin' an' shoutin', and made up the meada to them. Just as I got to my feet I saw the Leprechaun takin' a spring from the crutch at hersel', an' hersel' an' she havin' her arms out to catch him. The bull was snortin', an' he just measurin' hersel' behind. As I saw his hind hoofs goin' up in the air as he made for her I stood in me wild run the same as if I got a bullet. I couldn't put one foot before the other if I was to get the highest throne above in heaven. I felt me heart in me throat, an' hot blood fillin' me mouth.

"The rest of what I saw was more like a bad drame or a nightmare than anything else. When the Leprechaun made a leap at hersel', and she havin' her arms out to catch him, she just missed him be a few inches. He shot past her from a great spring on the crutch, an' as he did so he whipped the red shawl from her head, an' runnin' on waved it in the moonlight. The very minute he did Hersel' staggered an' fell. The bull, seein the red shawl wavin', whipped round after the Leprechaun. The Leprechaun had saved the life of hersel'. But the bull was fast upon him. Whatever about runnin' away from the boys on the crutch he could never get away from the bull. The sight of the red shawl had made him frantic. He belled until the whole parish was filled with the sound. As quick as thought the Leprechaun stuck the crutch in the ground, threw the red shawl upon it, an' stepped to one side. The Leprechaun was no size along side of the crutch with the red shawl of hersel' on the top of it. There was steam comin' out of the nostrils of the bull an' white froth from his mouth as he let down the head an' went for the crutch an' the shawl. We all saw Thade Casey's crutch goin' up into the air like a rocket, an' there

was a tear of the shawl. The bull didn't expect such a soft job of it, an' he made such a woeful drive that the strength of it brought him down on his two foremost feet. The minute it did, we all thought the sight would lave our eyes to see the Leprechaun makin' a spring upon his back, an' goin' astride of the bull, an' grapplin' in his neck.

"The bull gave another roar, got on his feet, an' with fire flashin' from his eyes buck-leaped and stood on his hind feet an' his fore feet an' cut the divil a such capers about the place as a bull was ever known or beholdin' to cut before. But through it all the Leprechaun stuck to his sate, with his two hands buried in the bull's hair, as secure as a bee on a flyin' train. With one whisk of the tail, an' a root among the grass with the hind legs that sent scraws up in the air, the bull went full gallop across the meada. One leap brought him up on the fort, another leap brought him the other side of it, an' then across with him over the mearin' in a clane spring in the direction of Coolafin. As the bull went over the mearin' out of the meada the Leprechaun whipped off the mushroom cap, waved it in the air, an' we heard a cheer from his crackled oul' pipin' voice.

"Sight nor light, trace or tidings, colour or clue, was never seen, known or heard tell of ever after either of the bull or the Leprechaun.

"But it wasn't long until all the people in Killmeen began to remark on the way oul' Thade Casey, his sons, an' his sons's children, were gettin' on in the world. They bought a new farm, left the cabin down be the stream, an' built a new two-storey house on the side of the hill. An' they stocked the land with the best, an' had horses an' side cars an' sent some of the children away to school to have priests, doctors, an' lawyers made of them. Before

twelve months was over their heads they were in the height of fine grandeur. Then it was known that oul' Thade had got a crock of goold from the Leprechaun, for while he was goin' on with his antics as he rode on Thade's shoulders from Larry Dolan's poplar tree down to the fort in the meada, 'twas whisperin' he was into his ear an' makin' the bargain with him over the crutch. He told oul' Thade where he'd get the crock, but wild horses wouldn't drag a word out oul' Thade of where he found the money.

"But I said to mesel' that the Leprechaun could well afford to give a couple of crocks to Thade Casey, for I was sure in me mind that over that night's work in Killmeen the fairies had to bury as much goold for the Leprechaun as would reach up to the top of Croagh Patrick.

"And from that hour to this the Leprechaun is livin' in the lap of luxury in the Country of the Young, where he's the Big Man of the Fairies, an' married to the lovely Princess.

"So, put down the kettle an' make the tay, an' if they don't live happy that we may."

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